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THE CONSPIRATOR OF CORDOVA

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW," ETC.

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THE CONSPIRATOR OF CORDOVA.

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A Novel.

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THE CONSPIRATOR OF CORDOVA.

CHAPTER I.

THE NORMAN KNIGHT—AN ADVENTURE.

AT the time of which we write nearly the whole of the Spanish peninsula, south of the Pyrenees, was under the Moorish rule. Abderahman III. sat upon the throne of Cordova, and the season of his reign is known as the Golden Age of the Moorish empire. The Moors were an enlightened and industrious race of people, and during their occupation of the country, agriculture, as well as the arts and sciences, flourished in a remarkable degree.

In short, so far were they in advance of other European nations in general knowledge, that great numbers of Christians, of all countries, went to study in the Arabian schools of Cordova. And, furthermore, the Moors had brought with them from the Orient a thousand ideas of luxury and elegance never entertained by the Goths; so that even their social and domestic

arrangements were far above those of their predecessors in point of comfort and refinement. The proximity, however, of these devoted followers of Islam to the restless and warlike knights of the Cross, led to continual scenes of border strife, and to not a few romantic adventures.

A day in early summer, had been warm and clear; and now, as the sun was sinking towards the western horizon, the balmy breeze, which had been laden with fragrant odors from a thousand groves of orange and of citron, died away, until the leaves of the aspen were still, and the surface of the water reposed like a mirror. A few miles out from Cordova, where the road lay close upon the northern bank of the Guadalquiver, and beneath the shade of a grove of olives, sat two men. The first was a Christian, and a noble knight, as his garb plainly indicated. His boots were russet, with light, golden spurs attached; his hose of white silk, with trunks of amber satin; a doublet of emerald velvet; a short cloak of purple, slashed with white satin, with collar of rich point lace; and a light cap of green velvet, from the side of which swept a white ostrich feather. He was about five-and-twenty years of age, possessing a powerful frame, the full, symmetrical, muscular form of which had been developed by a thorough course of knightly training even from childhood. His face was fair and frank, the features bold and marked, the whole contour presenting a remarkable type of strong masculine beauty.

Such was Leon de Bournay, a knight of Normandy, and only son of the old Baron, Robert de Bournay, whose deeds of arms were known throughout all

Christendom. Sir Leon had come to Cordova to study. The time might not be far distant when he would be called to rule over the broad barony of Bournay, and he wished to qualify himself for the work. In the science of arms he was already a proficient; few men dared to oppose his lance or broadsword, but he felt that the true prince should be able to instruct his people in those sciences which come nearer to the peace and comfort of their homes and firesides, and hence he had sought the help of the renowned scholars of the Moorish schools.

Sir Leon's companion was a short, stout, hearty, genial looking individual, with broad, massive shoulders, a thick neck, and a head which betrayed considerable pugnacity in its peculiarity of form, though a rich vein of humor and good-will, which seemed to well up from his deep bosom, served in a great measure to counterbalance the rougher traits of his character. He was the knight's most faithful esquire and body servant, having been his attendant from early boyhood. He was some ten years older than his master, and his garb was much after the same pattern as that already described; only the fabrics were coarser and more substantial, and the feather which he wore in his brown cap, secured by a silver button and loop, was from an eagle's wing.

"Come, come, my master," said the esquire, with a restless movement, "it is high time that we were on our way back to the city; for, if my wits do not fail me, there is a storm brewing."

The knight turned his gaze upon the point where the sun was just sinking behind the crescent crowned minarets of the great mosque of Cordova, and after a while he replied:

"Don't be alarmed, Gabriel. We shall have daylight for a good hour yet."

"Aye, but it isn't the loss of daylight I'm thinking about," quickly retorted the other. "It's the storm that troubles me. We are a league and a half from the city, with nothing but our legs to depend upon; and it will be dark before we can get home. Don't you feel how the air has changed?"

"I feel that the breeze has died away," replied Sir Leon, without looking up.

"And that isn't all, my master. Just look off towards those mountains. There's where the storms gather."

The knight looked as his companion had directed. A spur of the Sierra Morena loomed up darkly in the distance, and heavy masses of clouds were already gathering above it.

"There may be a storm of some kind," he said; "but it isn't worth while to fret about it. We'll start soon."

Gabriel regarded his master for some time in silence, and his countenance plainly showed that he was far from being satisfied. Finally, with an effort such as one makes who has resolved to do some hazardous thing, he said:

"My dear master, I know very well what all this means. Don't be offended, for I would offer no insolence. But I know what it signifies. You wish to see the lady Lulah. You know that she has ridden out into the country with her attendants, and you will stop here just to see her return."

"Well," answered the knight. He did not seem to be offended; and yet he did not appear to be pleased. "Well," he said, looking into his follower's face.

"But it is not well," returned Gabriel. "It is as bad as it can possibly be."

"I don't see how," said Leon, carelessly.

"I'll tell you how," responded the esquire. "In the first place, am I not right in my conjecture?"

"Perhaps so."

"Then just look at it: Suppose you sit here, and she passes—you will not see her face!"

"She may raise her veil," suggested the knight.

"Ah," cried the esquire with a shake of the head; "it is just as I thought. You are fairly in love with the Moorish maiden. And yet you have seen her only twice."

"But," interposed Leon, ardently, "I know that she revealed her charming face to me on the second occasion of her own free will; and I know, too, that she looked upon me with tender emotion. By my knightly honor, she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw!"

"And what if she is," proposed Gabriel, argumentatively. "What can she ever be to you?"

"If she loves me, she may be much."

"Bless my soul and body, what do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. I must know if she returns my love, and, if she does—"

"Well—what?"

"Why—then I'll next try to gain her for my own."

"Are you crazy, my master?"

"Not quite, Gabriel!"

"And yet you talk of gaining Lulah?"

"Well."

"But, I say, it is not well. Is she not the proudest maiden in all Cordova?—aye, in all Spain, for that

matter, for the king has no daughter; so the daughter of his chief sheik and vizier must be the foremost princess of the realm. And do you suppose that Baal Tamar will ever give his only child up to a Christian knight?"

"Not quite so fast, my good Gabriel. It hath happened, ere this, that Christian knights have won Moorish damsels without regard to the will of the parents."

"Now, by Saint Mark, Sir Leon, if thy whim runneth in that wise, I shall set thee down for mad. Dost mean, in sober truth, that thou would'st try to run away with the lady?"

"I mean this," replied the knight, speaking with vehement earnestness: "if the daughter of Baal Tamar returned my love, I would have her if the thing were possible. So there let the matter rest."

"Allow me one word more," urged Gabriel, with persistent zeal. "I have not said all yet. Hath it not occurred to you that the lady Lulah is betrothed to the Sheik Abu Zamar, Governor of Cazalla?"

"That is no proof that she loves him."

"O, my master, your blindness is past my understanding. Verily the face of this Moorish maiden hath bewitched thee."

"Peace, good Gabriel. I have heard sufficient. What sound is that?"

"Sound enough!" replied the esquire, casting his eyes to the northward. "It is as I warned you. The storm is even now upon us. See—it is almost here. The sun is gone, and the rain is coming."

It was as Gabriel had said. The wind came suddenly

sweeping upon the river with a cheerless voice ; the tops of the great trees swayed to and fro ; and presently the rain-drops began to fall. Sir Leon knew that the storm thus brewed in the stern passes of the wild Morena, was to be a severe one, and he thought of shelter. Not far from the olive grove was the cot of an humble vine dresser, and towards this he concluded to make his way. In fact, it was the only dwelling within half a league, so he was not long in making the choice.

"We can find shelter there," he said to his companion ; "and, if need be, we can remain all night."

"Aye," returned Gabriel, whose anxiety for his master's comfort overcame all other considerations, "I think the old man can find good rest for thee. I know him well."

"So do I," added Leon, as they started into a brisk walk ; "and as for rest, a Norman knight asks only room in which to stretch his body, and a shelter from the falling rain."

The cot in question was situated beneath a high bluff which lifted a crown of citron trees high over the bank of the river, against the face of which was trained a luxuriant growth of grape vines.

Between this bluff and the river the space was but a few rods ; the cot was not directly in this pass, however, but a little upon one side, in a sort of niche which seemed made on purpose to receive it. Our two adventurers had just reached the door of the humble dwelling, when they were startled by the sound of a horse's feet close at hand.

"That animal is frightened," said Gabriel, after he had listened a moment.

"Aye, surely," returned Leon. "And—hark—there is more than one. By my natal star, there is trouble afoot. Ha! did'st hear that cry? Now by Saint Peter, there's work ahead!"

Thus speaking, the knight leaped out into the road, and in a moment more a horse came dashing at headlong speed around the bluff; but its gait was not a steady one; it came with plunging, rearing leaps, swaying ever and anon from a direct course. Two things Leon saw at a glance: The horse had a female upon its back, and a javelin in its side. A few more plunges, and the foaming, bleeding beast stopped suddenly, and went down upon its knees. The knight was upon the spot in an instant, and lifted the fair rider in his arms ere she was thrown from the saddle. The thick veil was blown from her face, and he gazed upon the features of the Lady Lulah! For an instant, as he held her to his bosom, his heart beat with a wild thrill; but a sense of knightly duty quickly recalled him from the sweet delirium, and he bore the maiden towards the cot. He saw that she was sensible, and as she opened her eyes upon him, he asked her if she was hurt. But her answer was cut off by the dashing up of another horse, and as she heard the sound, she clasped both her arms about the neck of the Norman knight, and cried out, in frantic tones, for him to save her.

"They have captured my attendants—they have killed my horse—and they seek to capture me!"

"Who?—who?" asked Leon.

"The mountain robbers!" she replied.

Leon comprehended the whole thing in a moment, and his movements were prompt and decided. Alcassim,

the old vine-dresser, had come out from his cot in season to witness the falling of the maiden's horse, and to him our hero resigned his fair charge.

"Bear her quickly to a place of shelter," he cried, "and leave us to deal with these fellows. For your life stop not here, but go!"

Without a word the old man caught the girl in his arms, and hastened to his cot; and Sir Leon, as he turned, was just in season to confront the horseman who had pulled up close upon his heels. The latter was a tall, powerful Arab, swart and sinewy, whose wicked look and wild garb bespoke the robber at a glance. And he was not alone, for behind him, and arriving almost at the same moment, came a companion of like look and bearing.

"Hold there!" cried the first robber, leaping from his horse, and starting towards the cot, where the vine-dresser was just entering the door with his fair burden.

"Back!" shouted the Norman knight, snatching his sword from its scabbard, and springing before the outlaw.

The robber stopped, for he could not well leap over the stalwart form which had thus interposed itself.

"Who are you?" he asked, moving back a pace, and drawing his broad sabre. At first he seemed inclined to treat the youth as of little account, but as he surveyed his proportions more critically, he evidently altered his mind, for he gathered himself as though for desperate work.

"I am one who will protect yonder maiden from all enemies," replied our hero. "Now who are you?"

"Dog of a Christian! I'll let you know who I am

right quickly. The maiden is mine; so stand out of my way or your head shall fly from your shoulders!"

"Beware, villain! You shall not reach the maiden alive!"

"We'll see!"

As the robber hissed, between his clenched teeth, he sprang upon the knight, with his heavy sabre uplifted, bringing it down with a force which would surely have accomplished its purpose had it hit where it was aimed. But it did not hit thus. It only cleaved the empty air, and ere the Arab could recover from the headlong impulse of the profitless stroke, the sword of the knight was driven through his body.

In the meantime the second robber had not been unemployed. His first movement upon dismounting, had been towards the cot; but Gabriel, taking the cue from his master's course, had resolutely interposed. The outlaw seemed to think it an easy matter to sweep the esquire from his path; but, upon making the attempt, he found the task rather difficult. At the first outset he received a cut upon the right shoulder, which entered to the bone. This served to open his eyes; but it also made him mad, so that he did not improve by the knowledge he had gained. He rushed upon his short opponent, as though he would trample him to the earth; but, in his hot haste he seemed to forget that there might be something in his way. He quickly discovered this something, however, though he could not have had much opportunity for considering it, as the point of Gabriel's sword entered the cavity just above the breast bone, passing clear through the

neck and separating two of the vertebræ of the spinal column.

"It's all done here, my master," said the esquire, as Sir Leon approached him.

"I wonder if there are more coming," returned the knight, bending his ear towards the road.

"If there are, the lady will know," suggested Gabriel. "So, suppose we get out of this rain. These villains may as well rest as they are for the present."

"So be it," replied Leon. He cast one more look upon the dead robbers, and then turned towards the cot.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE.

When the Norman knight entered the dwelling, which he did without ceremony, he found the vine-dresser alone, and busily engaged in brightening up a fire upon the narrow hearth. The old man started up as the fierce blast from the open door swept upon him, and grasped a spear that stood close by his side.

"We are friends, my good Alcassim," said Leon, as he saw the defensive movement.

"Ah—yes, yes—I see," the host replied, when he had recognized the new-comers. "But the robbers?"

"They are both dead."

"Good! I would have come and helped you, Sir Knight, but I had much to do here. I have but just

borne the lady Lulah to my wife's apartment; and as she was wet and cold I thought I would light a fire. I trust that you are neither of you wounded."

"Not a scratch," said our hero. "Your Arab robbers are hardly a match at arms for Norman warriors. But, tell me—is the lady safe?"

"I think so, fair sir. My good wife has her in charge, and will soon have dry clothes upon her."

As Alcassim spoke a door in one corner was opened and a woman looked in. She retired in a moment, but soon returned, however, and entered the apartment. She was Doris, the vine-dresser's wife—a small, pleasant-looking woman, some fifty years of age, with a strong cast of Arab features.

"Friends," she said, advancing a little way into the room, "we must ask your kindness and forbearance under present circumstances. The lady Lulah is forced to appear before you unveiled."

"We can't stand upon nice custom always," remarked Alcassim.

"Our honor shall be her safe protection," added the knight.

Gabriel shook his head, and said nothing, though he was evidently thinking a great deal.

Doris withdrew, and presently re-appeared, leading the maiden by the hand, who, when she saw the young knight, trembled perceptibly, though her salutation was composed and dignified. When she had noticed those who were present, she sat down upon the soft cushion which the hostess had arranged before the fire, and for a little while remained busy with her own reflections. She was in truth a beautiful maiden—people said the

most beautiful in all Cordova. She was nineteen years of age; of medium stature, and most elegant proportions; with silken hair of glossy blackness; deep, dark, lustrous eyes, the lashes of which drooped with a dreamy sweetness; cheeks full and round; the nose finely carved; and lips like blushing fruit just bursting into delicious ripeness. Her skin was as pure and fair as alabaster, its warm, rich tints alone betraying her Moorish origin.

Sir Leon gazed upon her until he was lost in wonder at her transcendant beauty; nor was he recalled to himself until she raised her eyes to wards him. As he met her glance, so full of delicate gratitude, his tongue was loosed, and he found speech.

"Fair lady," he said, "I trust that I have not intruded upon you. I might not have brought myself thus in your way had not this storm driven me in."

"Kind sir," she replied, quickly and earnestly, "you do me wrong if you think I could regard your presence as an intrusion. Indeed, I owe you too much. Rather let me feel that I am the intruder."

"With a storm beating down from the sky, and wicked robbers rushing on in the rear, I fancy we should not be too particular touching the place or method of our retreat," interposed Gabriel, coming to his master's assistance.

"The man speaks wisely," said Doris.

"Aye, and truly," added Alcassim.

"Then we'll make ourselves as comfortable as possible, and put up with what we cannot help," responded the esquire; and thus speaking, he settled back into his seat as though he would leave others to carry on the conversation.

The ice was now so far broken that Leon was emboldened to speak more directly to the maiden, especially as he believed that he could detect in her look a willingness, if not a desire, to converse with him.

"Lady," he said, "you must pardon me if I seem somewhat inquisitive; but I am anxious to know how the danger you have so narrowly escaped came upon you."

"Surely, sir," she replied, raising her lustrous eyes till their beams fell upon him with a witching power, "you, of all others, have the right to know; and when I have told you my story you will not feel that the death which has overtaken the dastardly wretches at your hands, was undeserved. It has been my custom, for some time, to ride about the country with my female attendants, though my father supposes that I do not venture beyond the limits of our gardens and palaces without the protection of stouter arms. To-day, however, the sweet and balmy breeze lured me farther away. I started out with four of my trusty females, and, instead of turning back when I ought, I kept on to the mountains.

"We had rested our horses awhile beneath some trees, and were upon the point of starting upon our return, when four horsemen dashed out from a thicket directly upon us. So quick were their motions, and so startled were we, that my companions were captured ere resistance could be thought of. I heard the shouts of the ruffians, and was quickly assured that they were robbers, and that they belonged to the band of the terrible Miramolin. One stout villain seized my horse by the bit, but the noble animal broke from him, and started

away. I could not help my poor companions—I would have done it had the power been mine—but, alas, they were beyond my reach. As my horse darted away, two of the robbers hurled their javelins after him, and one of the cruel weapons was buried in his side. But he did not stop—he did not slacken his speed. He knew that he was pursued, and he put forth all his strength. By and by the storm came, and that seemed for the time to revive him. The two robbers were very near to me when the clouds burst; but as the cold rain poured upon my fevered beast, he dashed forward with new strength, and finally brought me to your kind care and protection, O, sir, I cannot tell you how grateful I am."

"And yet, lady," returned the knight, in a subdued tone, but with a kindling eye, "you cannot be more grateful than I am."

The maiden cast her eyes upon the floor, for she knew not what to say. That she thought much, and felt much, was very evident; but she seemed afraid to speak—almost afraid again to meet the gaze of her preserver. Gabriel, however, seemed to understand the matter, for he shook his head with the old meaning look; and then turned the conversation upon the robbers.

"They are a reckless set," said the vine-dresser, "and many a crusade has been made against them; but they cannot be overcome. Their numbers are great, and their strongholds in the fastnesses of the mountains are impregnable. And, moreover, their mighty chieftain, Miramolin, is as crafty as he is bold and wicked."

"I have heard," remarked Leon, "that this Miramolin was once a sheik of noble standing in Cordova."

The vine-dresser looked towards Lulah, as though she were best qualified to answer this question.

"I have heard," she said, directing her glance once more upon our hero, "that Miramolin is a nephew of the great rebel, Omar ben Hafs. He comes of a stock fond of rebellion and blood, and is a most fitting representative. He is a daring man, and a wicked one."

"I should like to meet him," muttered Leon, half to himself.

"No, no," cried the maiden, quickly, "there is no need of that." She seemed to realize that she had betrayed an unusual emotion, for she cast her eyes again upon the floor with unmistakable marks of confusion.

Gabriel looked into his master's face, and when he saw the expression which rested there he shook his head with more meaning than before. The host, however, had noticed nothing unusual, and he went on talking about the robbers until his good wife called his attention to the making of provision for entertaining their guests through the night.

"I do not think it would be safe for me to venture upon my return in this storm," said Lulah, bending her ear to the howling blast and beating rain.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Doris, horrified at the thought. "You could not live in such a time. No, no,—we will afford you such shelter as our poor cot will afford, and in the morning I hope the storm may be passed."

So it was arranged that they should all remain through the night, and at an early hour preparations were made for retiring. The hostess took Lulah with her into her own apartment, while her husband provided for Leon and Gabriel.

At an early hour in the morning our hero was astir, and upon going out of doors he found the sun just rising, bright and clear, over the mountains. The storm had been a severe one, as was evident from the deep gullies upon the hillside, and the swollen, rushing river; but all was calm now overhead, and the roads were not damaged. He called Gabriel away, and took a walk around the bluff.

"My master," said the squire, after they had walked some distance in silence, "I suppose you mean to accompany the lady Lulah back to the city?"

"Of course," answered the knight, without raising his eyes.

"Perhaps you would like to have me give up my horse, that I won from that robber, and take myself along on foot."

"I had thought of that, Gabriel."

"So I supposed. But, don't you think it would be safer for me to bear the lady company, and leave you to trudge alone?"

"How?"

"I think I had better be the maiden's escort."

"You, Gabriel? Ha, ha,—you are witty this morning."

"And yet I am in earnest."

"In earnest? Why—what do you mean?"

"I mean that the lady has seen enough of you."

"Gabriel!"

"Don't be offended, my master; but be reasonable. I can see, and I know what I say. The maiden already feels more than gratitude—more than friendship—towards you. You have no right to trifle with her.

Don't get angry. I don't mean that you would stoop to wilful trifling ; but, if you awaken love in her bosom, your own sense must tell you that it can only end in disappointment."

"Do you think she loves me, Gabriel ?"

Now if the esquire had been wise he would have turned this off very lightly ; but he was honest, and did not know what a power love might have over the bravest knight.

"Love you !" he replied, with energy. "Why, bless your soul, her heart fluttered when she spoke to you, like a wounded dove. I sat and watched her, and I saw it all."

"And I suppose you watched me, too ?"

"I couldn't help it."

"And did you see my heart flutter ?"

"Your heart don't flutter so readily, my master ; but the tale was told in your eyes. Ah—you'd better let me go with her, while you busy yourself with something which may have a more satisfactory ending."

The knight walked on a little while in a thoughtful mood, and finally he stopped and spoke :

"Gabriel, I am not offended at anything you have said ; but I do not wish to hear any more upon this subject. I shall be governed entirely by my own judgment, and the consequences be upon my own head. Now let it pass."

This was a finality which the esquire was forced to accept, and he would have allowed the conversation to turn upon some other topic, only his master did not seem inclined to talk, so he was comparatively silent during the remainder of the walk.

When they returned to the cot they found the females up, and the morning meal prepared. After partaking of the repast, the knight approached Lulah, and asked her if he should bear her company to her home. She did not wish to trouble him, she said, but she should feel safer under his escort.

Surely it was no trouble to him. It would be a pleasure.

So Gabriel was forced to give up his horse, and after he had helped Alcassim move away the bodies of the dead robbers, he brought the beasts won from the robbers to the door, having fixed Lulah's saddle, taken from her dead steed, upon the animal she was to ride. Leon and the lady were both warm in their gratitude to the good host and his wife, and when they had bestowed upon them a few golden tokens thereof, they mounted their horses, and started towards the city, the esquire trudging along behind.

As soon as the knight and his companion had fairly broken the reserve, so that conversation flowed freely, they found plenty of things to talk about. Leon told her of his home in Normandy—of his broad estates, and thriving villages—of his great old castle, and numerous retainers—and of the nature of the country and its people. Then they talked of Spain—of its government—and of the occasional wars between the Moors and the Christians. This latter theme came nigh to their hearts, and, under the impulse of an emotion something more than generous, the maiden said :

"I see not why the Moor and the Christian should fight. Surely, they are of one great family—of one blood—children of one great Father."

"Lady, you speak like a Christian," returned Leon, bending his gaze upon her.

"Perhaps I have reason to do so," she replied, with a light smile. "The woman who nursed me from infancy to maidenhood, was a Christian, though very few were aware of the fact. She was from Suakin, and was a good, intelligent woman."

"Ah," cried de Bournay, urged on by a power which he did not try to control, "if you were but willing to take another Christian companion!" He stopped from the weight of his own feelings. Lulah trembled, but made no reply. She was not angry, though, for the light of her dark eye was too rich and warm. Leon de Bournay saw this, and he proceeded:

"Do not think me presumptuous, nor blame me for my seeming haste. We are near to the city, and another opportunity may not offer itself; so I cannot let this one pass. O, I have loved you since first I saw you. Your image has been with me continually, a part of my every thought. And this sweet season of communion has opened the bud to its fullest blossom of love and devotion. Say—O, say—does my love offend you?"

The answer was a silent one, with head bowed, and with bright tears glistening upon the long lashes.

"Sweet Lulah, may I not call you dearest? May I not love you?" The horses were very near together, and he took her hand as he spoke. "Last night," he added, with gushing tenderness, "when you reclined upon my bosom—when I held you in these arms, and pledged my life for your safety—I thought 'twould be an earthly heaven where thy love should reign. O, shall not that bliss be mine?"

She did not draw her hand away, nor did she yet speak; but she trembled more perceptibly, and the tears gathered more thickly upon her silken lashes.

"See," he cried, "here comes thy father with his attendants."

Lulah looked up, and saw that it was so. Not far distant, and just emerging from the gates of a private palace, was the Sheik Baal Tamar, and with him came a score more of horsemen.

"We must soon separate," said our hero, in quick, earnest tones. "O, will you not speak one word? Shall I not hope that you love me?"

The maiden hesitated no longer. With a warm, soft light beaming from her lustrous eyes, and with earnest truth in every line of her beautiful face, she frankly, plainly said:

"I would not lie to save a crown; and from thee I would nothing conceal. If it is weakness, then I am weak; if it is wrong, Allah forgive me. I cannot say I love thee not, for my heart is fast in thy keeping. Be generous, noble sir, and grant me all indulgence. At some time we may meet again."

"And until then," cried the knight, "I may know that thou lovest me?"

"With a love that must live while my heart beats," replied Lulah, utterly unable to disguise or control this first warm gushing of her soul's new affection.

In a moment more the new-comers were so near that further conversation was impossible, and the knight of Normandy turned to receive the noble sheik.

CHAPTER III.

RATHER DUBIOUS.

Baal Tamar, the prime minister of Abderahman III., was a stout knight of middle age, and of an open, frank countenance. He was proud of his position, and tenacious of his rights, but far from being arbitrary or unjust. Those who knew him only as an officer found him stern and unyielding, while those who commanded his friendship found him faithful and true.

There was one man in the minister's train whom we will introduce and describe here, since he is to play an important part in our story. This was Abu Zamar, Governor of Cazalla. He was a young man, not over thirty; of a stout, well-proportioned frame; and, withal, very handsome, so far as mere outward features can go. He was the son of a man who had been a very near and dear friend to the king, and hence his preferment to the office he held; for, had Abderahman judged him solely by his fitness, he would never have appointed him to so important a governorship. However, if the monarch saw little executive ability in the child of his old friend, he did not suspect positive evil; so he left him in his honorable position. And he did more. He asked his prime minister to bestow upon Abu Zamar

the hand of the fair Lulah; and the minister had consented so to do. We said that Abu Zamar was handsome; but he who sought a true friend would never have dared to trust him. The glitter of his black eye was icy and snake-like, and the curl of his thin, bloodless lip was bitter and sarcastic.

Baal Tamar hastened towards his daughter when he saw her, and when he had embraced her, he was anxious to know what had happened to detain her through the long night. She told him, in as few words as possible, of the venture she had made towards the mountains—of the attack of the robbers—of the capture of her attendants—of her flight—and of her final rescue by the brave Norman knight. She grew warm in her speech, and her eye sent forth a deeper glow, as she told of de Bournay's gallant conduct. Her father saw only gratitude in her look and tone, and when he turned towards our hero, he grasped him by the hand, and thanked him with tears in his eyes.

"Noble sir," he cried. "I have long known thee for an upright, studious man, but henceforth I will know thee for one of my dearest friends. Come with me to my palace, and I will thank thee again."

"Not now, not now," returned de Bournay, deeply touched by the sheik's gratitude. "I must repair to my own lodgings; but, at some other time, I may be happy to enjoy your liberal hospitality. At all events, sir, I shall bear your friendship near to my heart, and cherish it as an honor."

"Very well," responded Baal Tamar. "You must do now as you please; but remember, my doors are always open to you."

Thus speaking, the sheik turned to some of his followers, and bade them prepare a new horse for the lady Lulah; and when this had been done, the beast which she had thus far ridden, was given up to Gabriel, who had already reached the spot. Before Lulah turned away with her father, she cast a loving glance upon Leon, and murmured some words of blessing and gratitude. He replied to them as best he could, and then bade her a tender adieu.

There was one in the train of the minister who saw more than gratitude in the look and tone of the maiden, and who detected something deeper than mere friendship in the bearing of the Norman knight; and that was Abu Zamar. His dark eyes flashed with a lightning gleam as he noticed this, and his hand crept nervously down to the hilt of his sword. But he made no further demonstration then. Those who knew him best saw that he was troubled, and some there were who could divine its cause, though they may have passed it by as only a momentary cloud of passion. Once the young sheik seemed upon the point of addressing the Christian knight; but he turned his horse with an abrupt jerk of the rein, and rode away by the side of Baal Tamar.

De Bournay watched the party until they were gone from his sight, and then started on, with his eyes bent upon his saddle-bow; but he was speedily aroused from his reverie by Gabriel, who had ridden up to his side.

"My master," said the esquire, in a tone of much concern, "do you know what you have done?"

"Done?" repeated Leon, with an inquiring look.

"Aye. Can you see what you've done?"

"I'm not in a mood for jesting, Gabriel."

"God forbid that I should jest at such a time as this. No, no. By my honor, Sir Leon, I do mean to serve and save thee, if I can. Did you not notice the countenance of that snake-eyed Moor, the Governor of Cazalla?"

"No—I did not look him in the face."

"But I did, my master; and I can swear that he means thee no good. Surely you know his character."

"I have heard it spoken of."

"Then you should know him well enough. I tell thee, he is jealous of thee. He marked the bearing of the lady Lulah, even to her very look; and he watched thee, too; and I saw his hand clutched upon his sword-hilt as he gazed upon thee; and I could read the look of vengeance which spread all over his cold, wicked face. You must beware of that man!"

"Nonsense, Gabriel. You are frightened without a cause. I have no fear of Abu Zamar. Even if he had cause for enmity——"

"Hold, my master. Not quite so fast. Let me meet you as you go. Hath he not cause for enmity? If you have not forgotten your trust in me—if you have not entirely overlooked my long friendship for thee—answer me plainly. Do you not love the Moorish maiden?"

"Yes."

"And have you not spoken of love to her?"

"Yes."

"And she, as you rode together, did respond in love to thee?"

"Aye, Gabriel, thou art right."

"And do you think that Abu Zamar could not see this? Upon my soul, he saw it all, and knew it very

well; for it was written as plainly upon the maiden's face, and upon your own, as though the god of love himself had painted it with a brush. And is not Lulah his affianced bride? Doth he not expect soon to possess her hand, and gain new power and wealth thereby? And will you still say that he hath no cause for enmity towards thee?"

"Well, well," returned de Bournay, a little impatiently, "he may find cause for enmity; but he will not dare to harm me."

"You deceive yourself, Sir Leon. Abu Zamar dares do anything that may minister to his passions; and he may do it with comparative safety, too. Remember, he is a Moorish governor, while you are as a stranger in the midst of a wayward, revengeful people. I tell you, he will never allow you to go in safety to the dwelling of Baal Taman. As sure as you live, he will seek some speedy revenge upon you."

"Tut, tut, Gabriel; you go beyond the bounds of reason now. Still, there is much to be thought of in what you say, and I will give it all due consideration."

By this time they had reached a crowded part of the city, and the conversation was dropped. The knight rented a small dwelling near the river, the front of which stood close upon the street, while in the rear was a garden that extended to the water. This garden was protected by a high wall of solid masonry, with a gate opening to a boat-landing upon the river, and contained many choice fruit trees and fragrant flowers. Gabriel did the cooking, and took care of the premises, his master, however, often assisting him in the heavier work. The knight's first movement, upon reaching his abode,

was to change his raiment, after which he sat down to his studies, while his esquire went out to the market for provisions. Leon sat down to study; but his mind was not to be fixed upon the problems in the book before him. Strive and struggle as he would, the lovely Lulah was the one theme which captured his thoughts.

It was late in the afternoon. Gabriel was busy in the garden, and the knight was in his study, still dreaming over the adventure of the previous evening. As he sat thus, with his head leaning upon his hand, there came a rap upon the outer door. At first he did not move; but when the summons was repeated, he started forth to answer it; and he was not a little surprised upon finding Abu Zamar there, with two stout attendants.

"Sir Knight," spoke the governor, with the tone of one who has only some ordinary business to transact, "I would claim a few moments of your time, if you have them to spare."

"I am at your service, my lord," replied our hero. "Will you enter my dwelling?"

Abu Zamar bade his attendants to remain where they were, and then followed the knight to his private apartment.

"Will you be seated?" asked de Bournay, at the same time proffering him a stool.

"No," returned the Moor, "I will stand." His manner was now abrupt, and his look exceedingly nervous. "I have come," he resumed, "upon a business which I think may soon be settled, and I will proceed to it at once."

"I am all attention," said Leon, who had put aside his own seat.

"Then thus it is," resumed the visitor, with an icy, contracted tone: "You were last night thrown into circumstances which afforded you an opportunity of rendering important service to the lady Lulah. This morning you bore her company to the city. I shall not ask you of anything that has passed, for I know enough. Still I may here remark that I am not so blind as to be totally ignorant of those things which transpire before my very eyes; nor am I such a dolt as to be unable to read something where much is written. And now, sir, I come to the point. Baal Tamar, in the excess of his gratitude, offered you the hospitality of his palace. I ask you—do you mean to accept his invitation?"

"My lord, you ask me a strange question," replied de Bournay, with perfect calmness.

"And yet it is a question which I wish you would answer."

There was a spirit of haughtiness in his last speech which touched the Christian knight to the quick, and he answered not quite so coolly as before:

"The matter of visiting a friend is something confined to my own private affairs, and I do not choose to be questioned thereupon."

"Have a care, Sir Christian. I am really bent upon promoting your own welfare. Will you answer my question?"

"No, sir,—I will not."

The Moor started like a troubled snake, and the thin, bloodless lip bore a livid hue.

"Enough upon that point," he said. "Since you will not answer my question, you will listen to my demand. You must not visit at the dwelling of Baal Tamar!"

"Must not?" repeated de Bournay, as though he might have misunderstood.

"You *must not*! This may seem precipitate, but I think it best to settle such matters in due season. If you let this thing stop where it is, all may be well; but if you pursue the acquaintance which you have accidently formed in the minister's family, the worst may be yours."

"My Lord of Cazella," returned Sir Leon, proudly and defiantly, "I will not pretend to misunderstand you, for your manner conveys as much meaning as do your words. But I have to assure you that nothing which you can say or do will have the least influence upon my future movements. I shall obey the laws of the land, and keep myself within the bounds of strict propriety; but beyond this I will acknowledge no mentor."

"By the beard of the Prophet, Sir Knight, you are running your infidel head into fatal danger!" cried the Moor, with his hand resting nervously upon the hilt of his sword.

"Since the danger is mine, I shall boldly meet it," replied de Bournay, growing more calm as the other became more angry.

"Is it thus you will have the matter left?" demanded Abu Zamar.

"It is."

"Then so be it!" the Moor said, in a whispering, hissing tone. He drew his bright blade half out from its golden scabbard, and thrust it back with a clang that echoed through the house. "Be it as you will have it,"

he added, turning towards the door. "If you are satisfied, I am." And with this he strode away.

In a little while Gabriel came in. He had seen the Moor go away, and he was anxious to know what had transpired.

"Is it not as I told you?" he said, after he had heard his master's story.

"Let it be as it may," returned the knight, quickly and emphatically, "I shall not change my course in the least. Upon that I am resolved."

"But, my master—"

"I want no buts, good Gabriel. I shall pursue the straight path of my own will, and abide the consequences. Still," the knight added, in a softer key, "I appreciate your motives, and thank you for your good intentions. But, ere we talk more upon the subject, we will await some further development."

Though the esquire said no more, yet he was far from being satisfied to let the matter drop thus. He reasoned with himself, and he reasoned well. De Bournay placed too much dependence upon his own natural and inherited resources. He fancied that his name and his character, and his lordly title of Norman Count, would be a sufficient protection against any malignant enemy. But Gabriel saw differently. He knew that a Norman title was of little worth in Cordova, especially against the wiles of a powerful and wealthy Moor. However, he consented to let the matter rest for the present, though he was resolved to keep his eyes open.

In the evening, after supper, the knight took his esquire with him, and pulled his light skiff out upon the

river, a crescent moon, some few days old, shedding a soft light over the water. They glided along by the palace of Baal Tamar, and as they passed those apartments which extended out into the garden, Leon gazed up at the lighted windows as though he would gain some token of the presence of the loved one. Gabriel read his thoughts, but made no remark. When the moon had gone they returned to their own landing, and soon afterwards sought their rest.

How long de Bournay had slept he could not tell, though it must have been past midnight when he was aroused by a loud noise at one of the doors. He had started from his bed, and was listening to the sound, when Gabriel rushed in with a lighted lamp in his hand.

"Ha—Gabriel—is this you? What means all this disturbance?"

"There are men in the garden, my master,—a large body of them."

"In the garden?"

"Yes. They must either have scaled the wall, or else have forced the water-gate. But there they are, and they surely mean us no good. We can make our escape into the street."

"But," interposed the knight, hurrying on his garments as he spoke, and securing his good sword, "what manner of men are they?"

"I have looked out at one of the rear windows," replied the esquire; "but I could not make them out. I could only see that they were armed, and that they came on as though for mischief—Hark! There goes the door! Quick, or it will be too late!"

But it was too late as it was. Whoever they were

that had thus attacked the house, they had come in from the river, and had forced the rear door without so much as asking if they might enter in. De Bournay had leaped out into the open court, with his sword in his hand, when he was confronted by a band of stout, villainous-looking men, one of whom carried a torch which he had just lighted, and which shed a lurid glare upon his wild, savage companions.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOUNTAIN CAVERN.

De Bournay's first thought upon meeting these strange intruders was, whether they could be officers of the city; but that query was answered as soon as it presented itself. In the first place, government officers, who had any sort of legal warrant for their proceedings, would not have sought such extraordinary entrance to the house; and, in the next place, and more conclusive still, these fellows were not dressed in the garb of any known government guard. As our hero regarded them more closely, he saw that they were habited very much after the fashion of the two robbers whom he had met on the night before. And not only this, but their countenances, as he could see them by the flaring light of the torch, bore the same wild aspect. There was one thing more he noticed, because it was something both remarkable and startling; and this was the leader of the ruffians.

He was a tall, athletic man, of middle age ; with a high, full brow ; eyes of intense brilliancy ; a long, thin nose, like an eagle's beak, with nostrils almost transparent, and a mouth suggestive of calm, cruel will. His garb was of the Arab pattern, though the rays of the torch revealed a glittering coat of mail beneath his dark crimson sack. Surely there was but one man in Spain who could present that appearance, and that was the renowned robber chieftain himself—the much dreaded Miramolin. This assurance flashed upon the knight as soon as he saw the strange man, and under the effect of the discovery he moved back to the wall, with his sword grasped more firmly in his hand ; for he thought now that he knew what this errand meant.

"How now?" he cried, turning his gaze upon the chieftain. "What meaneth this unseemly visit?"

"My Christian knight," replied the robber, as coolly and calmly as though he had been delivering the simplest errand, "I have come to request your presence at a place where you are very much wanted. Will you go with me?"

"I will go with no one until I know the reason for such a movement ; and even then the reason must be good and sufficient."

"I can save you all further trouble on that score, sir," resumed the chief, with a significant smile. "I am one whose authority is unquestionable, and from whose command there is no appeal. Abderahman rules in Cordova ; but Miramolin rules wherever his voice is heard ! Now, sir, the mountain king bids you come with him ! Will you go ?"

Though de Bournay had felt sure that the man before

him was the terrible outlaw, yet he was startled when the fact was thus plainly announced ; but still he was not the man to submit quietly to such a demand.

"I know you," he cried, planting his right foot firmly before him, and raising his sword ; "and I know your meaning now. But I am not a child to be thus entrapped by a band of ruffians. Back !—back, I say, or the first man who approaches me shall take the measure of my sword in his heart !"

"By the shrine of the Prophet, but thou art bold, my Christian dog ; but thy sword cannot serve thee now. I would not spill thy blood here, so put up that blade and be quiet."

"You take me not hence alive !" the knight replied, in a fierce tone. But he was doomed to an attack which he had not anticipated, and against which he had made no provision. Not far distant, and close in by the wall against which he leaned, stood a tall Arab, with a coiled rope of leather in his hand. This coil was cast upon the Christian with unerring precision, and as the noose upon the end of it slipped down over his shoulders, it was suddenly drawn tight, and in a moment more de Bournay was pulled violently upon the pavement. The thing was done so quietly, and so unexpectedly, that he had no opportunity for resistance ; and by the time he could fairly comprehend what had happened, he was completely overpowered. His limbs were securely bound, and his mouth stopped.

In the meantime, Gabriel had been overcome by superior force, and without further ceremony the robbers took their two captives up, and bore them out through the garden to the river, where a boat of their

own was in waiting, and into which the Christians were put. When Miramolin had taken his seat at the stern, the boat was pushed off, and pulled rapidly up the stream. The stout Arabs handled their oars with skill, and pulled silently on, the chieftain himself guiding the prow, and steering clear of the very few craft that were yet abroad. The stars were twinkling clearly, but they did not give light enough to reveal distant objects with any distinctness. On went the boat, beyond the city walls—beyond the last line of gardens and palaces—and still on beyond the bluff where stood the vine-dresser's cot—on to where a narrow stream came pouring in from the mountains. Into this tributary the boat was turned, and when they had gone a mile or more, they came to a broad basin at the foot of a cataract, where they stopped. The place was dark and dismal from the great trees which completely shut out the stars, and it was only by the most consummate skill that the boat had been brought up, amid the rocks, against the strong current. As soon as the captives had been taken to the shore the lashings were removed from their ankles, and the bandages which had been upon their mouths, were transferred to their eyes; and thus blindfolded, with their arms still bound, they were led away.

"You are very particular," said Gabriel, "thus to hoodwink a man on such a night, and in such a place. What do you expect I could see? Say—d'ye understand me? Eh, won't ye answer?"

But he could gain no reply.

In like manner did Leon attempt to draw some remark from those who conducted him; but without avail. The robbers would not speak, but strode on,

sternly and silently, with their grasps fixed firmly upon the shoulders of their captives.

It was a long, tedious way by which the prisoners were led; at first among huge trees and creeping vines —then up a steep ascent, the footfalls echoing as though there were walls of rock upon either hand—then by a winding, devious course, about short circles and abrupt corners—until finally, at the end of an hour or more, they stopped. There was a hurried consultation, and then the captives were led forward, as though by a narrow pass—then caused to stoop low down, in which position they were forced on into a place where the breeze no longer moved upon them. The footsteps which had accompanied them now receded—a heavy clang was heard, like the closing of a ponderous door, and then all was still. De Bournay listened awhile, but there was no sound save the breathing of one companion.

"Gabriel!"

"I am here, my master."

"We are alone."

"Yes."

"And in a prison of some kind."

"Yes."

"Can we not unbind each other's hands?"

"I think so. Let us try."

They soon felt their way together, and stood back to back, in which situation Gabriel succeeded in casting the lashings from his master's wrists; and shortly afterwards his own bonds were in like manner removed. To take off the hoodwinks was now but the work of a moment.

"Well," said Gabriel, after he had opened and closed his eyes until he was assured that they were in working order, "we haven't gained much by this operation. My soul, how dark!"

And so it was dark. With eyes shut, or open, it was all the same. Not a ray of light was visible.

"Since we can't see, let's try the sense of feeling," suggested the esquire. "We may find out thus what manner of place we are in."

"But move carefully," said de Bournay, "for there may be pitfalls in our way.

"I had thought of that," responded Gabriel. "There's no knowing what these villains may have planned for us. I'll feel my way as I go, with both feet and hands."

The examination was accordingly made, and it resulted as they had expected. They found a rough, uneven floor; walls jagged and many-sided, with numerous cavities which they did not care to explore. Finally they found a comfortable sitting-place, where they could rest their weary limbs, and they sat down.

"We are in a cavern of some sort," said the knight; "and evidently far up the mountain."

"So it strikes me," responded Gabriel.

"And of course," pursued de Bournay, "the robbers mean to have revenge upon us for having slain their two companions."

"Perhaps so," said the esquire.

"*Perhaps!* Is it not evident? What else can be their intent?"

"They seem to have found us very quickly."

"And is there anything surprising in that? Does

not every man in Cordova know where the knight of Normandy resides?"

"Aye—but consider, my master. From the time that we left the vine-dresser's cot to the coming of these rascals was but little over twelve hours——"

"Fifteen hours, at least, Gabriel."

"Well—call it so. Does it not strike you as rather remarkable that they should have visited the cot—found their dead companions—discovered the doers of the death—and come down upon us, all in so short a time? And, furthermore, we removed the bodies to some distance from the cot, and Alcassim assured me that he should swear that he knew not who killed them. I do not believe that the old man hath broken his word so readily."

"Then how do you account for it?"

"Can you think of no other way?"

"Not readily."

"Did you not have your eyes open as we came up the river?"

"Yes."

"And did you see nothing to arouse suspicion?"

"No."

"Ah, my master, while you were gazing up at the walls of Baal Tamar's palace, I was looking in another direction. I saw a boat lying close by our track; and in that boat I saw a man whom I knew to be the Governor of Cazalla; and I know that a signal was passed!"

"How?" cried Leon. "Your fancy must be running wild."

"No, no, my master," replied Gabriel, with firm

assurance; "I know what I saw. Of course it is within the bounds of possibility that I may have been mistaken, but I do not believe it. It is my firm opinion that Abu Zamar is at the bottom of this."

The thought was a startling one to de Bournay; but the more he reflected upon it, the more inclined was he to give it consideration. The meed of honor which one true knight is ever ready to award to another, led him to accept reluctantly this fearful hypothesis.

"Well, well," he said, after he had pondered a long while in silence, "it may be thus; though for the honor of knighthood, I hope it is not so. However, time may reveal to us the truth."

"And again," suggested Gabriel, in a lower tone, "we may die without gaining any more light. Doesn't it seem probable?"

"I can hardly think it," returned the knight, musingly. "Still," he added, "it may be so. If it is, I shall blame myself that I have brought you into the difficulty."

"And I shall blame you," retorted Gabriel, quickly and earnestly, "if you make another remark of that kind. To share your fate, be it what it may, is my wish. So let that pass. If our hope is weak, our prayers may be strong; and we'll pray for better things."

By and by the esquire who had had little sleep for some eight-and-forty hours, dropped off into a doze, and de Bournay was left alone with his thoughts. He took the character of Abu Zamar, as he was able to call it up from knowledge and from report, and spread it out before his mental vision. He examined it in all its

bearings and in all its parts; and finally he murmured to himself, as he summed up the whole:

"I think he hath done this! Aye—the hand of the Lord of Cazalla is visible in this!"

And with this assurance firmly fixed in his mind, he leaned back against the cold rock, and soon slumbered with his faithful follower.

When our hero awoke, he found Gabriel already stirring; and he also found the place quite light. It was a large, deep cavern; very irregular in shape; the roof being far above him, with a long, narrow fissure, through which the beams of morning made their way. The only thing which betrayed the intervention of human handiwork was the door, which was of iron, and skillfully fitted in its place.

"Have you been examining our quarters?" asked the knight, after he had taken a hasty survey of the cavern.

"Yes," replied the esquire. "I have peeped into all its corners, and I find myself forced to acknowledge that it is about the securest kind of a prison that I ever saw. The dungeons of the old castle at Bournay might be bed-chambers by the side of this."

Leon took another survey of the place, and then sat down upon his old seat.

"Surely," he said, "there is no way of escape from here; so we must wait the coming of our captors."

"Yes," answered Gabriel, also taking a seat.

"We have no weapons," remarked de Bournay, after a pause.

"None," said his companion.

"And must await our fate as calmly as possible."

"Yes."

Another season of silence followed, during which both the captives were busy with their own thoughts.

"Gabriel," finally said the knight, in a tone of deep solemnity, "I have weighed this matter very carefully, with all its facts, and all its possibilities; and I am forced to the conclusion that our death has been determined upon!"

"My good master," returned the esquire, gazing up with a look of pain, "I have not dared to break that thought to thee; but it hath appeared to me as it hath to thee. Oh, if I could die for thee!"

"Peace, my friend. Say not so. I would not purchase life at such a cost. Yet I thank thee. I know that thou hast loved me; and I, too, have loved thee; for thou hast been true and faithful. No, no—if either life is to be spared, it must be thine, for this stroke of dire vengeance is meant especially for me. I shall pray to them, Gabriel, for thy life, that thou mayest carry from me some word to Normandy. Death would be relieved of half its terrors if I could send my last word of love to my aged mother. Oh, I hope I may accomplish this!"

"Alas!" groaned the esquire, with deep emotion, "it would be a sad journey for me. Death would be preferable. How should I meet thy mother—how should I meet the men of Normandy—with the word upon my lips that I had left thee to die?"

Ere de Bournay could make any reply to this, the ponderous iron door was swung open, and the robber chieftain, followed by half a dozen of his savage companions, entered the cavern.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE BATTLE.

As Miramolin advanced, the knight arose to his feet, and for some little time the two regarded each other in silence. The robber was the first to speak.

"Leon de Bournay," he said, with stern politeness, "perhaps you wonder what is the meaning of all this. You must have asked yourself the question many times since you have been here."

The knight hesitated in his reply—not because he was at loss for an answer, but because he was more deeply engaged in studying the features of the strange man before him. Surely, he said to himself, such a man must have some good qualities. To be sure, there were marks of stern, harsh purpose upon that remarkable face; and at times there appeared upon it gleams of cruel meaning; but the broad, large brow was an intellectual one, and the light of the dark, flashing eye, despite its fierceness, was not devoid of warmth and honor. In short, he was a man born for no subordinate place—not by nature necessarily wicked—but shrinking from nothing which came within the line of a cherished purpose. Such a man, once a rebel, would be a most

dangerous one. Such a man, once an outlaw, must be a powerful one. Such a man, once fixed in a purpose, would not be turned aside while life lasted.

"Thou art Miramolin, the chieftain of the robbers of the Morena?" said Leon, looking into the face of the outlaw Moor.

"I am," was the quiet response.

"Then I would like to know why you have done unto me as you have."

"I supposed you would wish to know that; and I can enlighten you right speedily. We of the mountains have a solemn compact—a compact entered into for our mutual safety and encouragement. We are sworn to revenge the death of a companion at all hazards. When a man enters our ranks, and becomes subject to my authority, he knows that, should he fall, the hand that laid him low must also fall. I think you can understand it now."

"I have nothing to deny," replied de Bournay, proudly; "nor will I affect an ignorance which I do not enjoy. I slew two of your men."

"Not so," interposed Gabriel, "I slew one of them."

"But in my cause," added the knight, still addressing the robber. "I, sir, am responsible for the deed; and I would not recall it for a dozen lives. A weak, defenceless maiden was in mortal danger, and I rescued her."

"The men who attacked that lady did somewhat overstep the bounds of propriety," said Miramolin, "but still the deed hath high precedent. However, had they known who she was, they would not have done as they did. But that is not to the point. Two of our best men are gone, and the penalty must be paid."

"Let me ask you one question," returned the knight.

"Ask what you please, and I will answer as it shall suit me."

"How did you learn who slew your men?"

"How?" repeated the robber. The question seemed to disconcert him for the moment, but he quickly recovered. "How do I learn everything which transpires about these mountains?"

"I suppose you have spies in all directions," replied Leon, promptly; "but there were no spies abroad who could have detected the hand that did the deed you speak of. The knowledge has come to you, sir, from another source."

"Ah—you speak in riddles, Sir Knight. Explain yourself."

At this point Gabriel pulled his master by the sleeve, and bade him be careful.

"Don't expose your knowledge," he whispered.

De Bournay took the hint, and replied to the robber that he had no explanation to make.

"Only," he said, "I wondered who could have betrayed the thing so quickly."

Miramolin turned and spoke with his followers a few moments, and then addressed the knight again:

"Leon de Bournay, you must die! If you are a brave man, as I have heard that you are, you will drop very easily."

"I am not a coward," cried the Christain knight; "but I do shrink from such a death. What have I done that you should subject a brave, true man to such a fate? I do not fear to die; but I would not die such a death. I have borne myself through a score of hard-

fought battles, always in the foremost rank, looking death in the face as a crown of glory upon the head of knightly honor. If you are a brave man, sir, you might feel for me."

The robber chief regarded the knight with a look not unmixed with admiration; but the show of stern purpose was not changed.

"The true monarch, sir, executes the law," he replied; "and if he feels compassion he keeps it in his own bosom. I cannot depart from the rule. Your hour has come!"

"O!" groaned Leon, with his hands clasped upon his heaving bosom, "why have I been spared to this? Why have I been borne clear of all honorable death thus to die, like a criminal, with my spurs hacked off, and my sword taken from me?"

Miramolin gazed upon the captive a moment, and then he started away as though some sudden impulse had come upon him. He strode across the cavern a few times, and finally returned.

"Sir Christian," he said, with a new look upon his face, "I have heard that you were accounted one of the stoutest knights in Normandy."

"I am not ashamed of my record," replied de Bournay, wondering what was meant.

"I think there is one way which I can open to you for relief," the robber resumed, thoughtfully. "But," he added, with a significant shake of the head, "you have little room to hope for life. Wait a moment."

With this the chieftain turned to his followers, and conversed with them for some moments. They seemed much interested in what he said, and manifested a

degree of satisfaction which was not to be mistaken. When the robber again approached our hero, there was a light smile upon his face, and his dark eye beamed with unusual meaning.

"Sir knight," he said, "I told you that there might be one way of relief opened to you. You complained because your sword had been taken from you. Now, sir, there is, within our fastness here, a man who, I think, would stand before you, and give you your sword against him. At all events, I am willing to allow you the poor privilege of being slain by his hand."

"What!" cried Leon, starting forward; "do you mean that I shall have my sword restored to me?—that I shall be unbound, and free to defend myself?"

"That is my plan."

"And against one man?"

"Yes."

"If you will do this, I shall hold you guiltless of my fate."

"Be not too sure, Sir Christian."

"How?" asked Leon, "will you hold me to further trial still?"

"Not if you overcome the opponent whom I shall set against you."

"Then let the contest come,—let it come quickly."

"I must first go and see my man," said Miramolin. "If he consents you shall have every advantage which nature and education have afforded you. Wait."

With this the robber chieftain turned from the place, followed by his companions.

"Good Gabriel," cried the knight, as soon as they

were gone, "what do you make of this? Do you think he would deceive me?"

"I don't know," replied the esquire. "I watched the countenances of the villains who stood apart, and I should judge that they expected some rare sport. It strikes me that you are to be confronted by some stout rascal in whose powers they have full confidence."

"I care not if they bring against me the most mighty warrior that ever bowed to the Prophet. I only fear that there may be some deception. But we shall know anon."

Gabriel shook his head, but made no further reply; and before Leon could speak again, the door was opened, and two men entered, one of them bearing a large silver tray, upon which were a flagon of wine, some bread, and some dried fruit. He set it down upon a projection on the rock, remarking, as he did so:

"Our lord would have you refreshed ere the trial cometh. Eat and drink, for here is enough." And thus speaking he and his companion withdrew.

Both the prisoners ate with an appetite, though the wine was more grateful than the bread. De Bournay felt much refreshed after the repast, and was now only anxious to understand more clearly the nature of the ordeal to which he was to be subjected. He did not have to wait a great while, for within half an hour the robber chieftain again appeared, this time with only three followers.

"Now, Sir Christian," he said, "the hour of your trial hath come. I have a warrior who will meet thee, single-handed, and over his vanquished body thou mayest go free."

"Let me understand thee," cried de Bournay, eagerly. "I shall have a single opponent—I shall have my sword—I shall meet him, hand to hand—and if I vanquish him, I am free?"

"Yes."

"I and my companion—both free?"

"Yes."

"Then let me meet your champion. I am ready."

"But first," said the robber, "you must suffer yourself to be again hoodwinked; because, if, by the intervention of strange fate, you should go free, I would not have you carry away a knowledge of the curious avenues through which you are to pass."

The knight submitted quietly, as did his esquire; and when their eyes had been securely bound, they were led out from the cavern—led on through crooked ways—for a long distance; and when they stopped they heard the hum of many voices about them. When the bandage was removed from our hero's eyes he found himself upon a piece of level greensward, shut in upon all sides by great old trees, while about him were gathered some two or three hundred wild, savage-looking men. He could see the bold peak of a mountain not far above him, so he judged that he must be high up upon some fertile table of one of the slopes of the Morena. All this was taken in at a single glance of the eye, for his most eager attention was upon the outlaws who surrounded him.

"Leon de Bournay," spoke the chieftain, "here is thy sword. If you want a heavier one, you can have it."

"No, no," replied the knight, clutching eagerly at his weapon, which he recognized at a glance, "a better

blade than this was never wielded by mortal hand. It hath served me in many a hard fought battle, and it may serve me now. Am I to have a buckler ?"

"Yes. You may select one to suit yourself." Miramolin turned to some of his attendants, who brought forward a dozen shields.

De Bournay selected one of finely-tempered, polished steel, not much larger in diameter then the length of his fore-arm; and when he had suited the straps to his hold, he announced that he was ready.

"Let me see my antagonist now," he said.

"What ho, there !" shouted the robber chieftain, turning towards a body of men who sat upon the ground among the trees, "where is *Tarik?*"

"Holy angels !" gasped Gabriel, as he saw the man who obeyed this summons.

And no wonder that he exclaimed as he did. Even the bold knight himself could not repress the quiver which ran through his frame.

"Here is your man !" said Miramolin. "Will you accept the offer ?"

Our hero beheld before him a sight which might have caused the stoutest heart to quail. It was a man the like of which he had never seen before—a giant in size, and a perfect ogre in appearance. His head, which towered high above the Norman's crest, was of huge proportions, and covered with black, bushy hair; his neck was like a bull's; his shoulders broad and massive; while the muscles in his great arms, and upon his swart breast, worked like bundles of rope. He was entirely naked from the waist up, the lower part of his body being clothed in leather. In his right hand he wielded

a long, heavy sword, the weight of which seemed sufficient to crush an ordinary man, while upon his left arm he bore a broad buckler, the convex surface of which was painted black.

"Will you accept the offer?" asked Miramolin a second time, when he saw that the Christian had surveyed the huge proportions of the giant Tarik.

"You do not deceive me?" said Leon, earnestly.

"How?"

"In the promise you have made. If I vanquish this man both I and my servant may go free?"

"By Allah, yes. Vanquish Tarik, and I myself will conduct thee in safety from the mountains,—aye—I will bear thee alive and well to the very heart of the city."

"Then I accept the terms! It may be a hopeless ordeal; but death thus is preferable to any other. I am ready."

A wide space was quickly cleared, and guards set to keep the lookers-on from pressing forward. Poor Gabriel, who had been favored with a position in front, was pale and agitated, the rising and falling of his broad bosom telling how painfully his heart was throbbing.

"Now," said the robber chieftain, when all was ready, "the list is open. To your guard, my men, and let us see how brave you can be."

"God and fair Normandy!" ejaculated Gabriel, in fervent tones.

Leon de Bournay heard the words, and they helped to nerve his arm, for they bore a friendly sound, and breathed a sincere prayer.

"Have you said your prayers?" asked the giant, as he squared himself for the onset.

The words burnt upon the knight's heart, but they did not shake his nerves.

"I have prayed," he calmly replied; "and my prayer has been that I may conquer."

"No Christian god can answer such a prayer," retorted Tarik.

"Let the result show!" was Leon's response.

The Norman knight was never in better condition for battle than at the present time. Since he had been in Cordova, the hours not given to study and sleep, had been devoted to athletic exercises,—to rowing upon the river; to horseback riding; and to sword practice with his doughty esquire. He was fresh and strong, and gifted with every physical grace.

"Come," cried the giant, placing his right foot before him, "I am ready. Say where I shall lay your head."

"Select your own spot," returned our hero.

For the next few moments every breath was hushed, and even the breeze which had been playing amid the green foliage seemed to have been suddenly stilled. The Arab raised his ponderous sword, and brought it down with a sweep that would have cloven the skull of an ox; but it did not fall upon its mark, the knight having adroitly slipped away after the blow had been aimed. With a curse the monster regained his position and raised his weapon again.

By this time de Bournay had resolved upon the course he would pursue. He saw that the giant was confident in his own prowess—that he was impatient and

impetuous—and, furthermore, that he would waste his strength more in fretting than in physical labor.

Again the huge blade came sweeping down, and again its point struck only the empty air. A third time the same result followed, and then Tarik became furious, advancing as though he would crush the Christian beneath his feet. His blows came so thick and fast now that Leon was forced to ward them off with his buckler, which feat he performed with an adroitness that surprised no one more than it did the man who was thus baffled. The knight knew that if he received one of those blows squarely upon his buckler, the force would send him down; so he took them obliquely upon the finely tempered shield, thus turning them off as easily as a thatch sheds the falling rain.

Not once yet had the Norman knight attempted to use his sword, every energy of his nature being turned upon defending himself. He had led his huge antagonist over a wide area of ground; dodging and interposing his buckler by turns; never wavering in his glance, and still as fresh in his strength as when the battle began. On the other hand, Tarik was reeking with sweat, and panted with fatigue and chagrin.

Finally Leon gained the position which he had been anxious for some time to obtain. It was the only spot in the arena upon which the sunbeams fell; and here they poured down with their full force. A few more spasmodic blows had he warded off, and then he caught the bright beams of the sun upon the mirror-like surface of his polished buckler, and turned them upon the face of his antagonist. The sudden powerful glare blinded him as completely as though the sun itself had

flashed upon his eyes, and as he started away to avoid the annoyance, he instinctively raised his shield to shut out the dazzle which he could not otherwise escape. This was the moment of victory. Miramolin saw it, and called out to his companion to beware. But his warning came too late; for, even as he spoke, the bright, keen blade of the Christian knight pierced the giant Arab to the heart!

CHAPTER VI.

A LETTER.

The mountain robbers could not at first believe that Tarik was mortally wounded. They saw the Christian's sword pierce his bosom—they saw him reel and fall—and they saw the red life-blood gush forth in a stream from his swart breast. But, could it be that the giant, who had held a hundred men at bay—who had thrown an ox over his head in sport—and who had been accounted an expert swordsman—could it be that he had been vanquished by a Christian knight?

"Allah save us!" gasped the chieftain, starting forward as his champion fell.

"God and the Blessed Virgin be praised!" ejaculated Gabriel, springing to his master's side. "You are not hurt?"

"No, no, good Gabriel—not a scratch," the knight replied. He leaned upon the shoulder of his esquire as

he spoke, for he was somewhat weary from the strange ordeal through which he had passed.

In the meantime a number of the robbers had gathered about the prostrate form of the fallen Arab, and when they knew that he was dead their utterances of astonishment were almost without bound.

"What shall we do?" asked an officer, as he arose from his knees by the side of the huge corse.

"Let the Christian dog die!" cried another.

"Aye—let him die!" echoed a dozen voices; and in a moment a dozen swords had leaped from their scabbards.

"Hold!" shouted the chieftain, waving his men back. "The Christian has my pledge of safety."

"But he has not ours," replied the excited lieutenant.

"Aye—he has not ours!" echoed the others.

"But he has mine!" pronounced Miramolin, raising his form to its fullest height, and gazing around with flashing eyes. "Would ye break a solemn pledge?"

There was no open response to this.

"The Christian knight and his companion must go free, as I have promised," resumed the chieftain, facing his men, and speaking in tones which were not to be misunderstood by those who knew him. "Had I dreamed that this result could have followed I would not have granted the trial; but it is as it is. The pledge of Miramolin shall not be broken."

"But," cried the lieutenant, impetuously, "what shall we tell to the governor of—"

"Silence!" exclaimed the chieftain, darting a warning glance upon the officer. "Beware that you do not make a greater blunder than I have done. Leave that

with me. I have sworn by Allah; and my oath shall be kept! Who among you would make an enemy of Miramolin? Speak—for the man who opposes me now awakens my wrath."

Slowly the robbers moved back, until their chieftain was left alone with the Christian. Then Miramolin turned to our hero, and having surveyed him from head to foot, as though he would assure himself that the man who had stood before the giant was unharmed, he said—

"Leon de Bournay, I would have slain thee with a good relish an hour since; but I will not break my word. You have performed a wonder; you have vanquished the mightiest warrior in Spain; and it shall be as I said. So make haste to accompany me, for I will not be responsible for your life if you remain long here."

"I am ready to go now," replied de Bournay. "I and my esquire."

"Both," responded the Moor. "I said both; and both it shall be. But you must suffer yourself to be blinded again."

"I shall trust your honor," said Leon.

"It is well."

Without further remark, the chieftain motioned two of his men forward, and the eyes of the two captives were securely bandaged; and then they were led away from the place. They heard the curses of the robbers plainly muttered, but no further demonstration was made. They were conducted on, by the same devious ways as before, down steep acclivities, and through deep gorges, until they finally stopped where the low

murmur of the river broke plainly upon their ears. When the bandages were removed from their eyes they found themselves upon the bank of the Guadalquiver, close by the road. Miramolin was alone with them, his companions having remained at some distance behind.

"Now, Sir Christian," the chieftain said, "in a very few moments my oath will have been kept. Thou art now within an easy pull of Cordova. By yonder tree there is a boat, which is at your service. I shall see you safely off, and then return. None of my men shall trouble thee on thy way to the city. But, as thou hast proved thyself a brave man, and as thou hast furthermore trusted to my honor, I will be frank with thee. The moment that sees thee at thine own dwelling absolves me from all pledge."

"I understand," replied de Bournay. "You mean that I am liable, at any moment, after that, to be attacked again by your people?"

"Yes," said Miramolin. "And further still: If you remain in Cordova, you are liable at any moment to have a robber's dagger plunged to your heart. I, myself, were I to meet thee to-morrow, should not hesitate to take thy life by the most ready means within my power. So you understand me."

"Answer me one question," demanded the knight. "Are you determined to take my life if you can?"

"I have not said so."

"But such is nevertheless the case?"

"I cannot inform you upon that point, Sir Knight; but still I would advise you, if you have faith that way, to govern yourself accordingly."

"Thank you," said Leon.

Without making any reply to this the robber chieftain turned upon his heel, and was soon out of sight. For some moments the knight and his esquire remained silent, both gazing upon the point where Miramolin had disappeared. Gabriel was the first to speak.

"By Saint Peter, but this is an adventure!" he ejaculated, turning towards his master.

"Aye," responded de Bournay, "thou art right there. It is a most strong and marvelous affair."

"But we had better not stop here to talk; for there is no telling how soon those infidel dogs may come down upon us. Let's find the boat, and get upon the water as soon as possible."

Our hero made no objection to this, and they started towards the tree which Miramolin had pointed out, where they found the boat secured. They were soon seated, with the oars in their hands, and as quickly as possible they sought the middle of the stream, and started towards Cordova.

"By the hosts of Christendom," cried Gabriel, after they had pulled awhile in silence, "but thou didst a most wonderful thing, my master. I expected to see thee go down before that huge villain at the very first onset."

"But I did not go down," returned Leon.

"Aye, surely thou didst not. But, tell me—wert thou not fearful when thine eyes did first behold him?"

"Of a truth, good Gabriel, I was," replied the knight, frankly. "Yet, when he had stricken at me a few times I began to have more confidence. I saw all his points at a glance. In short, I was cool and hopeful, while he

was over-confident and impetuous. His own weight of arm, as he wasted his blows upon the empty air, did much to fatigue him. However, it is past, and I am the victor."

"And one thing more," pursued the esquire: "From what you have seen and heard, are you not satisfied that Abu Zamar is at the bottom of this?"

"Yes, Gabriel, I think he is."

"And will you remain in Cordova?"

"I don't know, I must think. We won't broach that subject further at present. Let my course be what it may, I shall be very careful in my movements."

After this they rowed on in comparative silence until they reached the point where the gardens commenced, and where the rich palaces and gay kiosks began to cast their quaint reflections into the river. Here they relaxed their efforts somewhat, and, as they glided on, made passing remarks upon the beauties which oriental art had clustered about the Moorish capital. Finally they pulled up at their own landing, where their first movement was to ascertain what damage had been done by the invasion of the robbers. Only the lock of the gate had been broken, and this Gabriel proceeded to repair at once, at the same time taking the precaution to fix a stout beam against the gate, so that it could not be opened from without, even if the lock should be again forced.

When our hero gained his chamber, he found by the dial upon his window-stool that it was a little past the middle of the afternoon. No one had been in the dwelling since he left, the front door remaining fast, and everything else being in the same state as when he

went away. There was provision enough on hand; so neither of them went out that evening. Before retiring they held a long and earnest conversation upon the subject of their future course. Gabriel was for returning immediately to Normandy.

"As I live," he said, "I am not moved to this by any fears for my own safety. I think not of myself. I am wholly anxious for thee, my master."

"I believe you, good Gabriel," replied the knight, "and I duly appreciate your motives, but we will not go yet. We know our enemies, and we can guard against them. Of assassination in the open streets there can be no danger; and we will look out that other avenues of harm are guarded. I shall not leave Cordova at present."

When Gabriel was alone he had a long talk with himself, the burden of which was the folly of love. He wondered very much how such a man as his master could be so weak.

"By the Saints of Normandy!" he muttered, as he struck the point of his sword into the cedar floor, and bent upon it until it seemed almost in danger of breaking, "I can't see how a knight who has seen so much of life—who has passed through so many scenes of danger—and who knows so much of human nature, can be so blind! I can't comprehend it. He's worse than a crazy man—a great deal worse. If he was downright crazy I could take him off home; but as it is, I must let him have his own way. My soul! what a fool love can make of a man!"

In the meantime Leon de Bournay was dwelling upon the same subject, though to him it came in a different

garb, and was viewed in a different light. He was resolved that he would not leave Cordova until he had seen Lulah. Everything beyond that he left for future consideration.

"No manner of threatening—no terrors nor trials—shall turn me from my purpose," he said, as he paced to and fro in his study. "I will see Lulah, even though every robber in the Morena stood in my way!"

And so he felt. His love for the beautiful maiden had become the centre of every other emotion; and so completely was his soul bound up in the passion that life itself was a secondary thing. He could no more have fled from Cordova, with the probability of seeing Lulah never again, than he could have deserted his own mother in the hour of mortal danger. He went to bed and slept, and on the following morning, when he had eaten his breakfast, he called Gabriel, and went out upon the river as usual. The esquire strongly opposed the movement, but Leon would not listen.

They had pulled up by the great tower of Abderahman, and were floating leisurely back with the current, when Gabriel thought he detected a signal from a boat close in by the shore.

"Somebody is doing that for us, surely," he said.

De Bournay looked in the direction which his servant pointed out, and saw a small, white boat, with gilded prow, close under the wall of one of the stupendous embankments which Abderahman had built, in which was a single person.

"Aye," he responded, "it is some one signalizing to us."

"It is a black servant," said Gabriel.

"So it seems ; but we'll go and see."

"Is it safe ?" suggested the esquire, with some show of uneasiness. "If anybody wants to see us, why don't they come out into broad daylight ?"

"Never mind," returned the knight. "There can be no danger ; and, beside, I am determined to find out who it is, and what is wanted. So pull away."

Thus bidden, Gabriel plied his oar, and ere long they were close upon the boat from which the signal had been made. The occupant was a black servant, with a keen, searching eye, and intelligent look, whom our hero had met once or twice before, though never to speak with him, or know him.

"Did you make a signal to me ?" asked Leon.

"Yes," replied the black. "I think thou art Leon de Bournay, the Knight of Normandy."

"I am. What have you to do with me ?"

"Simply to deliver a letter, fair sir."

"From whom ?"

"The missive itself will explain that." And as the servant thus spoke, he drew from a pocket within his tunic a note of finest vellum, which was secured by a crimson ribbon, and sealed with blue wax.

"But this has no superscription," said the knight, turning the note over in his hand.

"Yet it is for thee, as thou wilt doubtless find when it is opened. And thus my errand is done."

With this the black shot his light boat away from the embankment, and was soon out of hearing.

"There's mischief in this," cried Gabriel. "There's some danger lurking near at hand, depend upon it. Let us get into the river again."

"Then take my oar, while I examine this missive," returned de Bournay.

Gabriel did as he was bidden, and soon had the boat in the middle of the stream again. In the meantime the knight cut the silken fastening of the note, and when he opened it his eye sparkled with a new light, and his heart beat more warmly. It was written in Arabiac characters, drawn with a delicate hand, and ran as follows:

"Leon de Bournay—I would see you this evening. There is danger for both of us. The heavens are dark and threatening, and the storm cometh. An evil genius is making poison the atmosphere about us. Come to me, for I need thy counsel. Come to me, for I would give thee warning. When the moon is upon the mountain's top, and its last beam falls over the city, come to the gate nearest the great bridge, which opens upon the water from my father's garden. Come, and gently knock upon the post, and thou shalt be admitted. In thy discreetness and fidelity I can safety confide. Come —do not fail. I am thine, as I have promised.

Lulah."

For a long time after he had read it did de Bournay gaze upon the fair writing of the note. Finally he refolded it, and placed it in his bosom, and then resumed his oar, giving his esquire directions to pull for home. When he reached his own apartment he read the missive over again and pressed it to his lips. Not a word had yet passed between him and his servant upon the subject. The day passed slowly, heavily away, and

when evening came the knight paced his room anxiously and uneasily. After a while he called Gabriel, and asked him where the moon was.

"It will be up an hour yet, my master."

"Let me know when it is near the mountains."

The esquire moved uneasily about for a few moments, and finally broached the subject which troubled him:

"Why should you watch the moon, my master?"

"I have an engagement, good Gabriel."

"You think it is with the lady Lulah?"

"Ah—how guessed you that?" asked Leon, with a start.

"I can see," replied Gabriel, with a knowing look. "Thy face is an old scroll to me, Sir Leon, and I can read what is written thereon, as plainly as though it were in a book. Don't blame me, for I could not help seeing what was so palpable. The note was from the maiden?"

"Yes."

"And hath she—"

"She hath bidden me to come and see her, Gabriel—to come when the moon is sinking behind the mountain—to come by the river, to the gate of her garden."

"And will you go?"

"Surely shall I."

"But, my master, pause and reflect."

"Hush, Gabriel. I shall go! Were all the genii whom Solomon enslaved, stationed between me and Baal Tamar's palace, I'd find my way thither."

The esquire dared say no more; so he went away to watch the moon.

CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTIC SHADOW.

By and by Gabriel came with the announcement that the moon was upon the top of the mountain.

"And," he added, "it is past midnight. Is it reasonable to suppose that the lady Lulah has made an appointment for such an hour?"

"I suppose nothing at all about it," returned Leon, rather abruptly. "I know that the appointment has been made."

"Aye—an appointment. But who hath made it?"

"You are foolish, my Gabriel."

"No, no—say not so, my master. I am careful—not foolish."

"But much over-careful," said the knight, buckling on his sword, and giving the sheath of his dagger an easier set. "Come I want you to accompany me."

"Then you are determined to go?"

"Most assuredly am I; and it is time that we were off, too; so make haste and prepare."

"I have only to put on my sword, and pray beforehand that it may not be needed."

The esquire made no further opposition, and ere long

he and his master were upon the river. The moon was wholly gone, and the breeze which came sweeping down from the Morena was cool and grateful. The stars twinkled brightly in the heavens, but as the adventurers pulled close in by the bank they were in dark obscurity.

"The gate nearest to the bridge," said de Bournay, as they passed the minister's palace, and glided along beneath the garden wall.

"Then here we have it," whispered Gabriel, drawing in his oar, and guiding the boat by the projecting rail. "Easy, now. Here are the stairs. Will you go up alone?"

"Yes," returned Leon. "Do you remain here as deeply in the shade as possible, and be ready to my call."

"Very well," said the esquire. "I hope it's all right."

"I have no fear," responded the knight, as he stepped from the boat. "I shall return ere long."

With this he mounted the stairs, and gave a light rap upon the post of the gate with the hilt of his sword, which, from a sort of natural instinct, he held drawn in his hand.

"Who is there?" demanded a voice from within.

"One who has been bidden to come," replied our hero.

"But this is a strange hour," continued the voice. "If you were bidden, was not the hour fixed?"

"Yes. I came when the moon was upon the top of the mountain."

"Then you have come in season."

The gate was carefully opened, and, by the dim starlight, de Bournay recognized the negro servant who had brought him the letter.

"Follow me," said the black, as soon as he had closed the gate. "My mistress waits for thee."

Through a deep grove of citrons, by a winding path—amid orange trees and stately palms—along by clumps of oleanders and flowering almonds—to a kiosk of white marble, about the slender columns of which clung blossoming vines in luxuriant profusion. This rosy loveliness could not all be seen in the deep night, but the fragrant air conveyed to the senses all its sweetness. The knight was led directly into the kiosk, where, upon a marble slab, with a lighted lantern close beside her, sat a female closely veiled. She started up as the visitor entered, and demanded to know who had come. The voice was low and sweet, and not to be mistaken by the lover's ear.

"Dear lady," replied Leon, "it is one for whom you sent—one who would have obeyed your call, even though a legion of jacwins had stood in his way."

Lulah reached forth her hand, and then turning to her servant, she bade him go and keep watch without.

"Sir Knight," she said, when the attendant was gone, "I trust that you will not deem it an impertinence that I have thus sent for thee."

"Tell me, first, that thou wilt not deem me impertinent if I call thee dear Lulah."

"I should be happier so," the maiden replied, gazing tenderly into her companion's face.

"Then, dearest Lulah," our hero cried, pressing the

fair hand which he held to his bosom, "I am glad thou hast called me to thee; so make no excuses."

"Then let us sit upon this bench," said Lulah, moving back towards the seat from which she had arisen. "I have something to say unto thee."

The beams from the lantern, coming through glass of a crimson stain, shed a soft, witching light upon objects close around it, but they could not have penetrated far into the darkness. They were sufficient, however, to reveal the countenances of the lovers, and betray the emotions which were stamped thereon.

"Now," resumed the maiden, after they had become seated, "I must tell thee why I sent so summary a message. There is danger very nigh unto thee."

"I know it, Lulah," returned the knight, taking her hand.

"But you cannot yet know of all the danger. Thou knowest Abu Zamar, the Governor of Cazalla."

"Yes—I know him well."

"Perhaps thou hast heard that I was his affianced bride?"

"I have heard so."

"Well—to a certain extent this is true. Abu Zamar enjoys the friendship of the king through the mere accident of birth. Out of love to a father did Abderahman bestow the governorship upon him; and from the same impulse did the monarch beseech my parent to grant him my hand. I have never yet been asked for a decisive answer, though I think my father considers that my hand belongs to the lord of Cazella. At all events, Abu Zamar himself considers that I am already his, and his acts are in accordance with that idea. I saw

him last evening ; and I saw him again this morning ; and, from remarks which dropped from his lips, I am sure that he had read our secret, and that he meditates harm to thee. I know his character—I know his disposition ; and I know that he would stop at no deed of blood which could minister to his passion for revenge."

"Can you tell me what he said, Lulah? Can you remember how he spoke of me?" asked Leon.

"I do not remember his exact words," replied the maiden, "for it was not his words that startled me. It was what I saw that gave me my fears. When he pronounced thy name, it was with a deadly hatred ; and I could see, by the flash of his eye, and the pressure of his thin, pale lip, that he would like to kill thee. I saw this—saw it so plainly that I could not mistake it—and my knowledge of the man enabled me to judge the rest."

"Then you think Abu Zamar would not hesitate to destroy me, if he could?"

"I am sure he would not."

"Dear Lulah, you shall know how nearly you have judged. But, first, I must bid you to be not frightened. Hark? What sound was that?"

"I heard something," replied the maiden, with a start. "It was very near."

They listened attentively, but heard nothing more.

"It must have been the step of Husam," said Lulah.

"Of Husam?"

"Aye—my attendant. No one else could have gained access here."

The lovers listened awhile longer, but as the sound was not repeated, they concluded that there could be no

danger. When they were thus assured Leon drew the maiden more closely to him, and proceeded to tell her of the adventures which had befallen him since their last meeting. He told of the visit he had received from Abu Zamar—of the coming of the robbers—of his capture—of his being conveyed to the mountains—of his condemnation—and of the ordeal through which he escaped. Lulah was sorely frightened when he told her of his capture by the robbers; and more frightened still when he told of the death to which he had been doomed; but when he told her of his battle with the terrible giant, she fairly cried out with terror. She had heard of Tarik, as had every one in Cordova, for the name of the gigantic robber had become a synonym for all that was to be feared and dreaded.

"Be not alarmed, dearest," whispered the knight. "If I have passed such dangers unscathed, surely I may pass more. I have my eyes open, and shall be very careful. I do not think they will dare to trouble me in open day while I am in the city."

"O, I know not what Abu Zamar may do," said Lulah, clinging to her lover with eager fondness. "He hath much power, and he will use it without justice or mercy. If you remain in the city, there will be constant danger."

"And if I leave the city," cried Leon, "must I not leave thee? By my soul, I cannot do that!"

"But I mean not that—O, I mean not that—de Bournay. I have learned to love too deeply—too deeply! Almost would I bear thee company ere thou should'st go away so."

"Sweet Lulah, at some time thou wilt bear me company."

"Aye, at some time; though I hope I may have my father's permission."

"Ah," said the knight, with a dubious shake of the head, "I fear we shall never gain that. The grand vizier of Cordova will scarcely consent to see his only child wed with a Christian."

"I don't know," replied Lulah, gazing down upon the marble pavement. "But," she added, after some hesitation, "we won't think of that now. It will be time to meet that necessity when it comes upon us. At present there is a greater obstacle—a danger—which must be avoided. When I sent thee that note I knew not that you were aware of it; but, it seems, you knew far more of it than I did."

At this juncture the lovers were disturbed by the entrance of the attendant, who came in hurriedly, and without notice.

"How now, Husam?" demanded Lulah, in a startled mood, for she knew that something unusual must have happened.

"Lady," quickly replied the black, advancing so that his whisper could be heard, "there is some one in the garden! Some one hath been near this kiosk. I have searched and listened, but I cannot discover the intruder."

"Some one in the garden!" cried the maiden, trembling violently. "Who can it be?"

"It may be only imagination," suggested de Bournay, endeavoring to allay his companion's fears.

"Nay, nay," interposed the black, with firm assur-

ance, "I know that I am not mistaken. I have distinctly seen some one gliding like a shadow about this place; and, like a shadow, hath it eluded me. It is even now somewhere at hand. I know it."

Lulah had too much confidence in Husam's sagacity to hope that he had been deceived; and the result was that she became sorely disturbed.

"It must be some eavesdropper," she said to her lover. "It may be some enemy. And yet I see not how such an one could have gained admittance. Oh, if it should be Abu Zamar! He might find his way through our apartments by the agency of some secret spy!"

"Let us not fear without a cause," urged the knight. "There may be a mistake of some kind. But still, I will not remain longer now. It may be better for both of us."

"I dare not stay," rejoined the maiden; "nor do I dare to have thee stay. We shall meet again."

"But when? how?"

"It shall not be long, my dear Leon. I have faithful servants, and the means of meeting are under my control. Even should this be a spy of Abu Zamar's, we may find some way of circumventing him. You shall hear from me—fear not."

Now that they were to separate, each tried to cheer the other; but yet they were ill at ease.

That they had been observed by some intruding party, and, perhaps, their conversation overheard, appeared evident; and surely, under the circumstances, that was sufficient occasion for fear. Still the light of Lulah's love made bright hopes for our hero, and in his

stout heart he was prepared for the worst. When he left the kiosk the maiden went with him to the entrance, where she clung for a moment to his bosom, murmuring as she did so :

"O, for my sake, Leon, have a care. May the Father of our Spirits guide and keep thee !"

Her sweet face was turned towards him, and, under the impulse of the blessed moment, he bent over and pressed his lips upon her fair cheek. She did not start—she was not offended—for she quickly returned the kiss.

The appearance of Husam at that moment caused them to turn their attention in another direction, for he had brought with him another attendant, who had come to accompany his mistress, while the former went with the visitor.

"If I learn anything of this strange intrusion, you shall be informed at the earliest opportunity," said Lulah.

De Bournay promised the same, and then, with a word of adieu, they parted. The knight followed Husam to the gate ; but before he suffered the way to be opened he had a question to ask. Might it not be that the wily black had invented the story of the intruder in order to terminate an interview which he imagined might be dangerous. He put the question, not in the form of an accusation, nor yet as though he would blame the black for the deception ; but only that his own mind might be at ease.

"Sir knight, you mistake me much if you imagine that I could do such a thing," said the black, with earnestness. "The shadow was there, as I said, and

though I could not find the substance, yet I know it was not far off. It is a strange thing, sir ; and it doth puzzle me exceedingly ; for I cannot understand how a stranger could have gained admittance to the garden. However, time may bring it all to light."

De Bournay saw that the black was impatient, and having frankly asked his pardon for the seeming doubt he had expressed, he suffered the gate to be opened. He found the boat as he had left it, with Gabriel wide awake and watchful ; and after they had pushed off, the esquire was anxious to know if there had been any danger.

"None," said Leon, "unless there have been interlopers about. No one has passed you, has there ?"

"No," replied Gabriel, "I have not seen a soul."

"Then I guess there's no danger," added our hero, who had made up his mind not to trouble his servant with a knowledge of what had transpired. "I have seen the lady Lulah," he continued, "and she had sent for me to inform me that Abu Zamar was my enemy. You can imagine, my good Gabriel, that, upon comparison, our notes were very nearly alike ; though I had the most of information to communicate."

It was two hours past midnight when the adventurers drew up at their own landing, and while Gabriel went over the premises to see that all was secure, his master sought his chamber, where he laid aside his sword, and sat down. He was deeply absorbed in reflecting upon the incidents of the night, when he thought he heard a rap upon the outer door. He listened, and presently the rap was repeated ; and, in a moment more, he heard voices, one of which he made out to be Gabriel's. He

was just thinking of going down, when his esquire came up.

"What is it, Gabriel?"

"A man says he must see you."

"Who is he?"

"I do not know. He seems to be a young man, and says he has business of the utmost importance, which he can communicate alone to the Norman knight. He is alone, I am sure."

"Then I will see him. Only, mind that you secure the door after you have admitted him. What think you?"

"I' faith, I don't know what to think, my master. He is a youth, and seems fair spoken and honest. He may be an assassin; and he may bring you news of value."

"If he is an assassin, and alone, I do not fear him," added Leon; "and if he hath anything of importance to communicate, I would see him. So go and bring him up. He did not give you his name?"

"No. He said he would give it to you."

"Never mind. Let him come."

When Gabriel had gone, the knight lighted an extra lamp, and then drew his sword close by his side; for he would not be without the means of defence in case of need. It was a strange hour for the visit of an honest man, and our hero wondered much what could be its meaning.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SHADOW.

Ere long Gabriel returned, and with him came the visitor. The latter was a youth, apparently not more than twenty years of age, if he was so old. He was small and light of frame ; graceful and symmetrical in form ; with a face of strange expression and beauty. His skin was of an olive hue, deep and rich despite its swarthiness ; and the eyes, which were large and shaded by heavy lashes, sent forth a light of wondrous brilliancy and power. He was dressed in a dark Moorish suit, the jubbee of black velvet, wrought with silver, over which was thrown a feredjee of crimson cloth. The only weapon he carried was a small dagger, which he wore in his sash.

Somewhere in his memory de Bournay had the counterpart of a face very much like the one now before him, though, as yet, he could not read the mystery. The gleam of the wondrous eyes seemed like something which had beamed upon him before ; and, moreover, there was a sort of magnetic influence, working out from the strange presence, which was not entirely new. At first the visitor seemed a little uneasy, and as he met

the searching gaze of the knight, he was inclined to avoid it; but gradually he composed himself, and having glanced his eyes about the room, he said:

"This is a strange hour for a visit, sir knight; but I was obliged to see you when I could find you. I think you have no occasion to fear me as I am now situated?"

"Certainly not," replied Leon, who liked the soft, boyish tones of the youthful Moor.

"Then," added the visitor, with a glance towards the esquire, "I would speak with the knight of Normandy alone. I trust you will grant me this favor."

"Certainly," said de Bournay. "Gabriel, you may leave us for a while. I will call you if you are wanted."

The esquire gave one more look at the stranger, and then left the room.

"Now, sir," pursued Leon, "we are alone, and you need not fear interruption. I am ready to listen."

"First," said the visitor, after a little thought, "you shall know with whom you are speaking; or, at least, you shall know enough to give me a reasonable name. I am called Euric. The future must decide how much more you shall know of me; though I am free to tell you that there be very few in Cordova who know any more of me than you now know."

De Bournay regarded the speaker with an earnest, wondering look. He was already interested, and his curiosity strangely excited.

"I think we have met before?" he said, inquiringly.

"Perhaps so," returned the youth; "though it amounts to little, one way or the other. As I said a moment ago, the future must determine the relations between us. I may never see you again; and I may

see you many times. At all events, I hope that, let this interview terminate as it may, the name of Euric shall never dwell painfully upon thine ear. And now, let me proceed to business. Be not alarmed at the revelation I must first make. You have been with the daughter of the grand vizier to-night."

"Ha!" exclaimed Leon, with a start.

"Be not alarmed, de Bournay. It is my knowledge of that fact that hath led me hither. I must tell you more: I have been in the garden of the vizier's palace; and I was very near to the kiosk where you and the Lady Lulah sat."

Again the knight started, and an exclamation of astonishment escaped him.

"I was there, Sir Leon, and, furthermore, I overheard much of your conversation."

"How?" cried our hero, in a tone of something more than displeasure, "was't you who lurked about the kiosk, and played the eaves-dropper? Was't you whom the lady's attendant saw, but could not apprehend?"

"Aye," calmly replied the youth. "But," he added with deep earnestness, "mark me, and believe me: I did not go there with the intention of doing such a thing. I no more expected when I secreted myself amid the shubbery that enfolded that kiosk, to hear what I heard than you expected to see me here to-night. Why I went thither it matters not. Suffice it now for me to assure you that, though I was not an unwilling listener, yet I had not designed it. I was there, and the presence of the servant prevented me from leaving; and what I there heard has caused this visit."

"Well," said our hero, more puzzled than ever, but yet disinclined to fear, "if you heard all that I said to the lady, you heard nothing of which I am ashamed."

"Surely not," returned the Moor, with a deeper gleaming of the eye. "But yet I heard that which startled and surprised me. The thing which I particularly noted was the story of your adventure among the mountain robbers. I think I understood you to say that you slew the giant Tarik?"

"I did," replied de Bournay.

"And thus you gained your life and freedom?"

"Yes."

"And I further understood that the governor of Cazalla was your enemy—that he must have set the robbers upon you?"

"Since you understood it so, so let it be," said Leon, with some hesitation. "I know not why I should conceal anything of this; and yet I like not to be too closely questioned concerning my own affairs. I am at a loss to understand what object you can have in view."

Euric, who had remained standing all this time, now took a seat by the table, and rested his head upon his hand. After a silence of some moments, during which he seemed to be deeply pondering, he said:

"I have an object in view, and I deem it an important one. Of course you must be aware that Abu Zamar hath much power."

"Yes."

"And you also know that he hath occasion for deep enmity towards thee."

"I will not deny it."

"You are further aware that he will be likely to pursue his purpose of vengeance to the end."

"I do not doubt it."

"Then," said the youth, after another moment of thought, "would it not be worth your while to find some means of securing your own safety, and, perhaps, of disarming his enmity?"

"How?" returned de Bournay.

"You understood the proposition."

"Aye; but I do not comprehend its meaning. How can I accomplish such a thing?"

"I think it can be done."

"If you mean that I can allay the enmity of Abu Zamar by removing the cause thereof, then I fear your proposition will be useless."

"You are in haste, sir. I meant no such thing. Your remark touches the lady Lulah, but I had no such allusion. With your love for the gentle maiden I have nothing to do. And, here let me say, that what I have this night learned shall be sacredly kept. If I have possessed myself of your secret, it shall never pass my lips to your injury. Are you satisfied upon that score?"

"Yes," replied our hero, quickly and frankly; for there was something in the tone and bearing of the young Moor which led him to put faith in his honesty. "I believe you willingly."

"Then," pursued Euric, in a lower key, as though he were approaching more important ground, "I will open the subject to you. I will not ask you for a promise of secrecy, because I believe that I may trust you. Am I not right in supposing that you would gladly relieve yourself from Abu Zamar's enmity?"

"Yes," answered Leon. "If I could do the thing with honor to myself—without violence to my nature or to the principles which I hold dear—I should not hesitate."

"Answer me one more question: Would you not like to see the Cross of the Christian set over Spain in place of the Crescent of the Moor?"

"I would like to see the Cross of Christ become the acknowledged symbol of all the world," replied de Bournay, warmly.

"But," continued Euric, "suppose there were, at this hour, a rebellion on foot in Cordova—a rebellion which looked to the dethronement of Abderahman—do you not think it would be for your interest to join it?"

"I do not understand you," said the knight, shaking his head.

"Then let me speak more plainly. There are, in Cordova, at the present time, as many as a thousand Christians."

"Just about that number," admitted Leon.

"And," added Euric, "if the present government were to be overthrown, they might stand a chance to gain some footing of political power. In the midst of the confusion Christian knights could be called in from other quarters, and thus the Cross might, at least, hold a place by the side of the Crescent."

"But," interposed de Bournay, restraining an expression of his astonishment, "what has all this to do with the governor of Cazella?"

"That is a blunt question, sir knight."

"Aye," returned Leon, "and methinks the plainer we are in such a matter, the sooner we shall arrive at a

satisfactory understanding. You first spoke of my relations with Abu Zamar. Will you now tell me what this last matter has to do with the first?"

"Abu Zamar is an ambitious man," answered Euric, in a whisper.

"Aye," responded de Bournay, in the same key.

"And, if he had a great work planned, he might like efficient aid."

"Well—"

"And what better aid could he expect than the swords of stout, brave Knights? By Allah! I think he would be right glad of the aid of him who overcame the robber giant."

"Let me understand you," said Leon, rather nervously. "Hath Abu Zamar sent you unto me?"

"Did I not tell thee that a mere accident had led me hither?" answered the Moor. "Abu Zamar hath not sent me."

"But you have authority to speak for him?"

"I may assume such authority."

"It matters not," said the Christian, in a louder tone, and with emphasis. "I think I understand you. There is a conspiracy afoot, at the head of which moves the governor of Cazalla."

"I said not so," interposed the Moor.

"Yet," pursued de Bournay, without hesitation or retraction, "so your speech hath given me to understand. There is a conspiracy afoot against the king, and Abu Zamar is at its head; and you would know if I will join it."

"Well," said Euric, "suppose I had put it thus?"

"Why," replied our hero, "I should be forced to

answer that I am a Norman knight—that from my childhood up I have been taught to do no deed of dishonor—that the escutcheon of my family bears no stain. I should tell you this—and then I should add—I came to Cordova to study. I came to improve myself in a knowledge of the arts and sciences, that I might be better able to rule and govern my people, and teach them how to live and improve. This government received me kindly, and thus far I have derived incalculable benefit from my sojourn here. Should I ever take up arms against Abderahman, it must be in open war, in a fair field, and with no such pledge of honor upon me as my present position in Cordova imposes."

"Then I understand that you will not join any conspiracy against the Moorish monarch?" said Euric.

"That is my meaning," calmly answered the knight.

"Not even to save your life?"

"I think I told you that my honor was at stake. My life is a second consideration."

Not once, during all that de Bournay had said, had the visitor betrayed any other emotion than that of deepest interest in his remarks; but now he arose from his seat, and took several turns across the apartment, seeming to reflect seriously as he walked. Finally he stopped, and looked his host in the face.

"Sir Leon de Bournay," he said, "I am satisfied that, for the present, further conference would be useless. If you will not join in a conspiracy, your own good judgment will tell you how much your personal safety depends upon your keeping secret what I have communicated."

"You shall not leave me with a misunderstanding,"

quickly replied the knight. "In all things I shall act as my own conscience shall dictate. I shall not needlessly expose myself, nor shall any consideration of mere personal safety lead me to falsehood or dishonor. Yet I may give thee this one assurance: I shall not act the part of the informer for the mere purpose of exposing any one."

"It is enough," rejoined the Moor. "I shall see you again; and in the meantime you may rest assured that I shall aid in bringing no harm upon you."

With this the strange visitor turned and left the room. De Bournay would have asked him many questions could he have framed them for speech; but the whole affair, with all its connections, was so remarkable and so puzzling, that he knew not what to ask.

Ere long Gabriel entered, and announced that he had let the visitor out.

"Is it a secret?" he asked, after he had waited some time without hearing anything from his master.

"It shall be no secret between thee and me," replied the knight; "though it had better not go further at present." And thereupon he related the circumstances of the interview which had taken place.

"Holy angels defend us!" ejaculated the esquire, when he had heard the story. "It is a plot, my master, for your ruin. Aye, and for the ruin of all the Christians in Cordova. This dog of a governor would be glad enough to gain the use of your sword; but his gratitude would be sure death."

"You are right, Gabriel. However, my answer was explicit enough, and I do not think I shall be troubled again upon the same errand."

"Of course," said the esquire, "we'll be secret about this matter; but still we ought to look to our friends."

"I shall not fail in that respect," returned de Bournay. "If there is danger to our people they shall know it. And now, Gabriel, answer me a question. You saw the face of this strange visitor?"

"Yes—very plainly."

"And do you think you ever saw him before?"

"Not that I know of."

"Well, well, it may be only a fancy of mine; but still there is something wondrously familiar about him. Nevertheless, it may be all a mistake. And now let us to bed, for there is but a short time left us for sleep. I'll dream upon the matter."

CHAPTER IX.

CONFERENCES WITH THE KING.

Abderahman, the Moorish King, was alone in one of his private apartments, whither he had retired from the audience chamber. He was still a young man—not over five-and-thirty; with a fair, bold front, and of commanding presence. No monarch in Europe enjoyed more fully the confidence and love of his people, nor had any more power. Yet Abderahman was unhappy. A cloud had gathered over his way, the deep shadows of which fell cold and cheerless upon him, rendering all the pomp and grandeur of his throne irksome and of no avail

towards pleasure or satisfaction. He had married but one wife—the fair Ariadne—who, by her beauty and accomplishments, and her kindness and gentleness, had so won upon his love, that he gave to her an undivided heart. But his beautiful wife had passed from him—not into the grave—ah, no! he had been far happier could it have been so! She was now locked up in a strong prison—accused of having committed the darkest crime that can stain the wife's character. The king believed she had been false to him. She had been accused of the deed, and the evidence had been deemed conclusive. And hence was Abderahman unhappy. At first he had intended to put his wife to death; but her prayerful entreaties turned him from the fatal purpose, and he threw her into prison instead. Sometimes he allowed himself to wonder if she might not be innocent; but the evidence had been too strong and direct to admit of such doubts, so he found no relief in them.

The king paced to and fro across the room, his mind dwelling upon the one great calamity, until long after the shades of night had fallen about his capital. Finally, however, he aroused himself from the moody fit, and called in his page.

"Has Abu Zamar yet made his appearance?" the monarch asked, as the boy bowed before him.

"I know not, sire. I have not seen him."

"Then go and ascertain and bring me word."

The page withdrew, and, when once more left alone, Abderahman clapped his hands, and started again across the apartment.

"By the mantle of the Prophet," he cried, "this rebellion, if one there be, may afford me opportunity

for some relief. It will give new food to my thoughts, and thus lift a terrible load from off my tortured mind. Let it come, rank and strong, if it will, and the energy of the monarch shall overcome the grief of the injured husband."

Presently the boy returned, and announced that the Governor of Cazalla was in waiting.

"Send him to me at once," was the king's order; and ere long Abu Zamar made his appearance. He bowed very low as he entered the royal presence, and hoped that Allah would spare the life of his sovereign many years.

"Thank you," returned the monarch, as he retired to his seat. "And now, good Abu," he added, "I will inform you why I have sent for you. Our well-beloved vizier, Baal Tamar, hath informed me that there is surely a conspiracy on foot somewhere in the kingdom."

"A conspiracy!" cried Abu Zamar, as though he did not comprehend; but at the same time quaking with sudden fear.

"Aye," replied the king, "I mean a conspiracy against our government—a conspiracy against my throne."

"But, sire, I have heard nothing of such a thing," said Abu, controlling his features so that they should not betray his fears. "It cannot be possible."

"O, as for that matter, all things are possible," returned Abderahman, quickly. "Rebellion does occur; and it may occur in Cordova. I think Baal Tamar must have good grounds for his fears. He is not a man to make such a statement without some due foundation."

"But what does the vizier say?" asked Abu, eagerly. "What has he discovered?"

"He has as yet found no clue to the conspirators; only he has seen signs which he thinks are not to be mistaken; and I have deemed it proper to put you upon the watch. You have not seen anything in Cazalla which would excite your suspicions?"

"Nothing, sire."

"Yet you may detect something now that you are forewarned. At all events, I would have you keep your eyes open, and note everything that may happen of an unusual character. I know not how deeply the seed may have taken root; nor do I know that any seed has been sown; but, if any have been sown, I would like to gather the crop in due season."

"Aye, truly, sire, it should be done so. I have as yet seen nothing in Cazalla; but I will watch narrowly for anything that may occur; and, be assured, my efforts shall be untiring."

"What of that arch rebel and robber, Miramolin? Have you yet made any headway against him?"

"I have done all I could do, sire; but his capture is impossible. His mountain fastnesses are impregnable, and his men are bold and numerous."

"By Allah," cried the king, smiting his hands together, "the audacity of that outlaw is surprising. He robs my couriers, stops my messengers, and kills my soldiers, as though it were mere pastime. Baal Tamar fears that the conspirators are in league with him."

"In league with Miramolin!" echoed Abu Zamar, with a start.

"Aye—so he thinks. And he thinks, too, that the conspiracy is already being organized."

"By my life, sire, I cannot believe it. You are too much loved in Cordova—your reign is too popular—the people have too much faith in you, to allow such a thought room in my mind. It may be that these robbers would like to overturn your throne; but I do not believe they could find sympathizers enough among your people."

"That remains to be seen," replied the king. "I hope it is as you say; but yet I cannot think that my vizier is so widely mistaken. However, you will at once institute careful watch in Cazalla, and note the movements of all who may wear a suspicious look."

"Most assuredly I will." The governor answered promptly, for he saw now that the king had no suspicion of him. "You may rely upon my fidelity, sire," he added, "and you may, I am sure, rest easy in the belief that, let rebellion come as it may, there will be ready swords enough to defend you from all harm."

"Upon your good sword I am sure to count," said Abderahman, with some warmth; for he dreamed not that one whom he had so befriended and exalted could prove treacherous. "I can trust you, Abu; and I will only pray that all my subjects will prove as loyal."

The king arose from his seat and took a turn across the room, and then, after a moment's thought, he continued:

"There is another subject upon which I wish to speak with you. Word has been brought to me that there is, in Cordova, a youth whose movements are suspicious. He has been seen by several persons, and some few

have felt sure that his face was familiar. He calls himself Euric. Have you heard of such a person?"

At the mention of that name, Abu Zamar started again, but not so perceptibly as before.

"Now that you speak of it," he replied, bowing his head as though trying to recollect, "I do remember the name; and I think, too, that I heard him spoken of as one about whom there was some mystery; but I did not pay much attention to it at the time."

"I would like much to see the youth," pursued the king, thoughtfully.

"Have you tried to find him?" asked Abu, carefully.

"Aye—I have, my governor; and the result of the effort makes me still more anxious. He seems to have some superhuman power. He eludes my officers like a thing of empty air. Should you see him, Abu, or should any of your servants see him, it is my wish that he may be brought before me."

"It shall be done as you desire, sire. I will look to it, and make every effort. And now, allow me to whisper to your royal ear a suspicion which lurks in my own mind."

"Ah—is't a new suspicion, Abu?"

"Not wholly new, sire, for I have held it some weeks; but would not trouble you with it until I had made some investigation. I have done so, and fear that my impressions are correct. You have spoken of conspiracy."

"Aye—"

"But as yet you have your eye upon no individuals save the mountain robbers."

"Even so, Abu."

"I have gone further than that, sire."

"Ha! Say ye so?"

"Aye."

"Then speak."

"It is thus, my royal master; I have reason to believe that the Christians are conspiring together against us."

"What Christians?" demanded the king, with startling energy.

"Those who have sought homes in Cordova—those who have come from their barbarous haunts to gain knowledge in our schools."

"Abu Zamar, have you reasonable proof of this?" asked the king, as though the thought had confounded him.

"I have proof enough to give me the strongest suspicion," replied Abu, in a tone of earnest sincerity.

"By the Blessed Prophet!" the monarch cried, clapping his hands as he strode across the floor, "if I can have proof of such a thing, the head of every Christian dog in my kingdom shall come off! But—tell me—what ground have you for suspicion? What have you seen?"

"Do you know the knight of Normandy—him called Leon de Bournay?" said Abu.

"Aye—I know him well. Surely he would not prove a villain."

"I know not what he may prove, sire; but I can tell you what I do know. In the first place, the Norman knight is the chiefest Christian of them all."

"That is true."

"And his course might be taken as a guide to the course of his companions?"

"Aye—certainly."

"Well—thus do I know concerning the Norman, Leon de Bournay. Of late he and his servant have made frequent excursions towards the mountains, and more than once have they been seen with some of the mountain robbers. A few nights since they were seen to leave the city in company with strange men, and I have no doubt that they are now with Miramolin, in some of his fastnesses."

"By Allah!" exclaimed Abderahman, "this does smack of mischief, most surely. The Norman shall be arrested forthwith; and he shall tell to me the truth, if there be any virtue in torture."

"It would be useless to send for him now," interposed the sheik, with a little hurriedness in his manner; "for I do not think he has yet returned. I was only waiting to see him once more in the city ere I communicated with you upon the subject."

The king strode across the apartment, stopping a moment near the centre, with his head bowed, and his hands clasped before him.

"By the life of Paradise," he finally cried, "this shall be looked into. It must be herein that the mystery of the conspiracy lies. I had not thought of these Christians; but I'll think of them now."

"And I shall help you, sire. I shall have an eye upon them, and what I see you shall know."

"Right, good Abu. I shall need the assistance of all my faithful subjects."

"Which," added the young sheik, with a low bow, "you will most assuredly have."

"At all events, I hope so," pursued the king. "And now," he added, while a fearful tremor was perceptible

in his voice, "I have one more question to ask. It touches a subject upon which I wish for no remark. I only want a simple answer to my question: Have you learned anything new concerning my queen?"

"Sire," replied Abu Zamar, with the appearance of much sincerity, "you have asked a simple question, and I shall return a simple answer. I have learned nothing new."

A silence of some moments ensued, during which the lord of Cazalla seemed waiting for his royal master to speak; but as the monarch did not do it, Abu finally added:

"I have learned nothing new, nor do I think it profitable to look for anything in that direction. Surely we have learned enough."

"Aye," cried Abderahman, in a tone of startling agony, and at the same time smiting himself upon the breast, "we have learned enough! O, Abu Zamar, I wish thou hadst not told me of it! I wish thou hadst never whispered thy first suspicion in that direction! I was happy before that whisper came,—but now—O!—O!—O!"

"My dearest master," exclaimed Cazalla, with a show of deepest concern, "would that I had died ere I had been the means of bringing sorrow upon thee. But I thought you should know what so nearly concerned your honor——"

"No more—no more!" interrupted the monarch, in a gasping tone, at the same time putting out his hand as though he would ward off a horrible spectre, "I know your intentions, and I find no fault with them. So let

the matter pass. That will do. Leave me for the present. Remember the information I seek."

The sheik said he would remember, and then turned from the room. He walked out into the court, and then into the street, where he stopped and looked about as looks one who would not be seen ; and, when he seemed assured that he was unobserved, he glided away into the darkness.

The king, when he was left alone, strode to and fro for a long time, with thoughts crowding so thickly upon him that he could consider nothing clearly. At length, however, he became more calm, and sat down.

"Is it possible," he said to himself, "that the Norman knight is guilty of this thing ? I could not have believed it. He has appeared to me to be the fairest Christian of them all. By Allah ! if he be guilty, then I can readily believe that all the rest of them may follow in his train. But—I'll satisfy myself forthwith. He may have returned—he may have come back under cover of the present night. At all events, it can do no harm to ascertain. I'll not wait for Abu Zamar's tardy motions."

After this he started up and called his page, whom he sent in quest of Baal Tamar. In the course of half an hour the vizier came, and the king told to him what the Governor of Cazalla had said concerning the knight of Normandy.

"By my hopes of Paradise," cried the minister, "I cannot believe it. There must be some mistake. Leon de Bournay is a true knight and a brave man."

"So I have thought," replied Abderahman ; "but we may be mistaken."

"I know," responded the vizier, "it is a very easy

thing to be mistaken. And, furthermore, I may be influenced in this man's favor by simple prejudice."

"Ah—how so?"

And then Baal Tamar went on and told how de Bournay had served the lady Lulah by grasping her from the hands of the mountain robbers.

"By the Prophet!" exclaimed the king, when he had heard the story, "but that was a brave deed, and a manly one. Still, Baal, what was the knight doing among those robbers?"

"You forget, sire—he was not so nearly among them as was my own child. He had only ridden out, as was his wont, for exercise."

"Yes, yes—I know," responded the monarch, thoughtfully. "And yet," he added, rather interrogatively, "he might have been out for evil. It is not altogether impossible."

"Of course not, sire. If it is true, what Abu Zamar says, then he must be guilty; and he should be arrested immediately."

"That is my idea. So I will send for him at once. He may be found; and, if he is, you shall wait and see him."

The king called his page again, and bade him go and summon Omar, the captain of the royal guard, to his presence. Ere long the captain made his appearance. He was a brave, soldierly-looking man, and stood at the head of the military force of the city.

"Dost know where Leon de Bournay, the Norman knight, sojourns?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire," the captain answered.

"Then mark me; I would have him brought before

me. If he is at his house, take him at all hazards, for I must see him. If he is not at his house, you need not search for him."

"Do I bring him as a prisoner, sire?"

"Aye—most assuredly—both him and his servant. Take with you such force as you may need."

The captain required no further instructions, for he was used to that kind of work; so he went out at once, and was soon on his way, with six stout soldiers, to perform his mission.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

When Abu Zamar left the royal palace, and glided so secretly away, as we have seen, he took his course towards that part of the city which had been the longest built, and where the houses were thickest. He found some narrow, dark streets, but he threaded them as one who was used to the way, walking on with long, quick strides. When he stopped it was before a gate, set in the low arch of a stout old wall, where he gave a distinct rap upon the brazen plate with the hilt of his dagger. Presently there came a sound from within like the whine of a dog, in answer to which Abu gave two raps with his dagger. The whine was repeated, and then Abu answered with three raps. These raps were repeated within, and then succeeded a silence of some

seconds, after which Abu Zamar gave one more rap. This seemed to complete the mystic signal, for very soon the gate was opened, and a voice from the darkness asked,—

"Who disturbs me at this hour?"

"One who has disturbed others in his time," answered the sheik.

"What others?" continued the unseen.

"They were those who had proved themselves true and faithful," replied the applicant.

"It is well!" pronounced the guardian, who now made his appearance, with a lantern in his hand. He was a stout, middle-aged man, habited in the garb of a common porter, though his face and bearing betokened the possessor of a rank somewhat higher than that.

"My lord of Cazalla," he said, after the new-comer had entered, and the gate had been closed, "you must pardon me for my strictness, but our oath is imperative."

"You did perfectly right, Muza. You have no business to know any one until the signal is complete. Have many of our friends yet assembled?"

"Yes, my lord—quite a number of them."

"It is well. Remain at your post—I can find the way in."

Abu Zamar crossed a narrow court, and at the extremity he entered a low arch, through which he was obliged to grope his way by the sense of feeling. By and by he found a door, and when this was opened he entered a small hall, where hung a lighted lantern. By a narrow passage, to a flight of stairs, and thence along another passage, and he was at the end of his journey.

He rapped upon a door, which, when opened, admitted him to a large, vaulted apartment, with stone walls and stone floor, which was well lighted by lamps suspended from the ceiling. A strange company were there assembled—strange for that place, at that hour. There was Hixem, a general of the Cordovan army ; and there was Alhakem, a lieutenant of the royal guard ; and Ismail, an Arabian prince, who had sought refuge in Cordova from persecution in his native country ; and there were others high in rank and renown, to the number of twenty, or more. Hixem was presiding over the assembly when Abu Zamar entered, but he soon gave up his seat to the youthful governor, who, when he had satisfied himself of the identity of those present, commanded the attention of the meeting.

"Brothers," he said, "I am glad to see so many of you in attendance. I should have been with you before, but a command from the king enforced my presence at the royal palace. And it is well for us that this thing happened. It is well that he sent for me as he did, for he gave me most important information. He told me that he feared there was rebellion on foot in Cordova !"

"Ha !" cried Hixem, as all present started with surprise, "have we a traitor among us ?"

"I think not," replied Abu Zamar, "though I fear that some of us may have been rather incautious. Baal Tamar, the grand vizier, has entertained the suspicion, and he it is, if any one, whom we have to fear. But I have taken steps to set their search upon the wrong track. The king sent for me, deeming me a most loyal subject, to urge that I should make all efforts to ascertain if there were any signs of conspiracy in Cazalla. I

tried at first to dissuade him from the fear; but he had too much confidence in the sagacity of his vizier for that. He was confident that there must be conspiracy somewhere, though he had no idea where it could be. As soon as I learned this latter fact, I pretended to have suspected some such thing myself. I had suspected the Christians, I told him. At first he was incredulous; but, by the relation of a few very handy facts, I soon occupied his mind with the thought, and he now fully believes that the Christians are the guilty party. This will divert his attention for awhile, and in the meantime we must be busy. The sooner we strike, the better. I have no fears that the king, or his vizier, will be diverted from the track upon which I have set them, for a week, at least; for I condemned to Abderahman only the Norman knight, Leon de Bournay, and he is well out of their way. They will search for him, but they cannot find him. And now, Hixem, how many men are you sure of?"

"Full a thousand," replied the general.

"So many?"

"Yes. We may not have them at the beginning, but they are sure for the struggle."

"Well, well—that is better than I expected. And you, Alhakem—how many can you muster?"

"I am not yet sure, my lord; but I think from four to five hundred."

"And you, Ismail—how many of your people are there?"

"Not over two hundred as yet," replied the prince; "though I hope to do better."

So others reported, until it was made to appear that

over three thousand men were ready in the capital itself, or within its environs.

"And I," said the lord of Cazalla, "can bring in a thousand men good and strong, and a thousand more will come from the mountains."

Some one not thoroughly initated into all the mysteries, arose and asked upon what terms Miramolin brought his mountain horde into the field.

"The terms are fair enough," replied Abu Zamar. "He and his men may have full pardon if they desire it."

Now had Abu told the whole truth, he would have told that the mountain robbers were to have full liberty for plunder in all the districts beyond Cazalla; but it was not deemed proper by the principal men of the conspiracy that this horrible thing should be known to all. All present knew that many heads were to fall—knew that all important officers in the kingdom were to be vacated by death where the incumbents did not come into the rebellion; but all were not prepared for an indiscriminate slaughter of women and children. Some further question might have been asked; but just as the president had ceased speaking, there came a rap upon the door, and directly afterwards Euric was admitted into the apartment.

All eyes were turned searchingly upon the boyish-looking conspirator, and more than one of those present seemed to regard him with distrust. He did not offer to take a seat immediately, but stood, with his cap in his hand, as though he expected to be interrogated; and in this he was not disappointed; for no sooner had quiet been restored than Abu Zamar addressed him:

"Euric, stand forward, for I have somewhat to say

unto thee. Now tell me," he added, as the youth obeyed, "how gained you a knowledge of our plans? I have told to these brethren present that you appeared before me as one who was initiated, and that your speech led me to put full faith in you. At that time I supposed you had come honestly by your information, so I did not question you particularly upon that point. However, upon consultation, each of the original members of our confederacy declares that he did not convey to you the information. We cannot find one who knows you—that is, who positively knows you—and thus we are not a little perplexed. I now, therefore, demand to know how you learned of the existence of our conspiracy."

"My lord," answered the youth, moderately, but firmly, "is it not enough that you should know that no man can have greater cause for enmity against the King of Cordova than have I? If this will not answer, let me tell you that I had conceived rebellion long before you and your companions had made a settled thing of it. Let that matter rest where it is."

"But," pursued Abu Zamar, "there has been much question touching your identity. Many present think you are not what you seem."

"Aye," cried Alhakem, arising in his place, "I can swear that he is not. If I have not before seen his face, then my wits must have forsaken me."

"And I," added Ismail, also rising, "can swear to the same; and I would have the youth tell me who he is."

"The desire is entertained by all," said Abu Zamar, "and you had better satisfy their curiosity."

"My lord," replied Euric, without the least hesitation,

or show of trepidation, "I wish it were in my power rightfully to tell you all you ask, but it is not. Still I will own that my father was a man of some note in Cordova, and through your memory of him you may recognize certain lineaments of my face; but it cannot be more than that. In time you shall know all that you desire, but not now. If you doubt my fidelity, try me. Put me to any test you please."

Upon this Hixem and Alhakem conferred together for a moment, and then both went to Abu's seat, where another conference was held. Presently the lord of Cazalla turned to the strange youth again.

"Euric," he said, in a low, careful, meaning tone, "there is one test to which we would put you."

"Name it, my lord."

"Before you came in I told to our brethren of a danger which threatened us. You know the grand vizier?"

"You mean Baal Tamar?"

"The same."

"Aye, my lord, I know him well—that is, as others know him."

"He, of all others, is most in our way. *We would have him removed!*"

The youth started, and a quiver ran through his frame; but he was soon calm again.

"*Will you remove him?*" asked Abu, slowly and solemnly.

"I will!" was Euric's response, spoken steadily and firmly.

"But," suggested Abu, who seemed not to have expected so unhesitating an answer, "do you realize the magnitude of the work?"

"Aye, my lord, I do, most fully; and when the word fell from your lips it caused me to tremble; but I can do it. I will do it, or die in the attempt. Can you ask more?"

"By Allah, no!" cried Abu Zamar, struck with admiration at the boy's spirit.

And others were equally influenced, as was evident from the whispered words that were spoken.

"When will you do it?" the governor asked.

"Whenever you command," was the ready rejoinder.

"The sooner the better," said Abu. "It were better for us that he should not see the light of another day. What say my brethren?"

"Let him die to-night!" spoke Hixem.

"Aye—to-night!" repeated all present.

"What say you, Euric—can you remove him before the dawning of another day?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then away at once; for you will have need to be upon the watch. But, mark me, if you prove treacherous—"

"Hold, my lord. If I meditated treachery, I would not thus cast my life into your hands."

"It is well. Go, and on the morrow bring us word of your success."

With this the strange youth withdrew, but before any remarks could be made upon the subject, which was so much a wonder to them all, the door was open again, in response to a regular signal, and Miramolin entered the chamber. All eyes were turned upon the robber chief as he stalked up the open aisle, and all breaths seemed for a moment hushed; for, high in station and

powerful as were some of those men, they could not repress a feeling of awe as they gazed upon the chieftain whose very name was such a terror in Cordova.

After the robber had taken his seat, Abu Zamar related to him some of the business which had been transacted, telling, even, how he had consigned the father of his own affianced bride to death. Miramolin listened to him till he had finished, and then he said, in a very quiet way :

"In one thing, Abu Zamar, thou art mistaken. The Norman knight is not dead."

"Not dead!" cried the lord of Cazalla, with a sudden start. "How can that be?"

"Remember," replied the robber, "that was a thing between thee and me, and not a project of our conspiracy."

"True," added Abu. "But still you told me he should die."

"And I told thee so in good faith, my lord ; and so I meant it should be. But listen." And thereupon Miramolin related how he had carried de Bournay into the mountains, and how he had, in a fanciful mood, allowed him to fight with the giant Tarik, with the pledge of freedom if he conquered.

"I would not break my word, even with a Christian," continued the chieftain, "and I set him free."

For a few moments the time was taken up by exclamations of wonder at the prowess of the Christian knight ; but Abu Zamar soon gained a hearing.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" he cried, "but this is most unfortunate. Should the king take a notion to

send for Leon de Bournay, and find him, it might be dangerous."

"I think it would," returned Miramolin, significantly; "for, if I am not greatly mistaken, the knight suspects that you had some hand in his capture."

"Ha!"

"I should judge so from one or two remarks which he let drop in my hearing. But, mind you, I know it not for a certainty."

"Be it as it will," exclaimed Abu, "he must not live now! By our very hopes of success, he must not."

"So I think," added the robber; "and so I felt when I let him go. I told him, as I left him, that, as soon as he set foot within this city, my pledge would be fulfilled."

"Ah—then you protect him no longer?"

"On the contrary, I owe him more enmity than before. I owe him enmity now for the death of Tarik; and, not only so, but all my men demand his life."

"Then," said the lord of Cazalla, "he must die this very night!"

"This very hour, if you say so," rejoined Miramolin. "I have a dozen of my trusty men at hand, and I will myself lead a few of them to the work; and thus I may slay two birds with one arrow. I will have revenge, and, at the same time, serve our cause."

"Will you do it?" cried the governor, starting up.

"Yes—my men are thirsting for his blood, and wait only the word from me."

"Then, in Heaven's name, away at once. Slay him where you find him—both him and his servant—and dispose of the bodies as best you can. Will you do this?"

"Aye—so had I planned. He shall die in his own house, if I find him there."

"Then away to the work. O! I wish you could bring us word of the result to-night!"

"I will if I can," replied the robber chieftain. And in a few moments more he had started for the work of death!

CHAPTER XI.

DANGEROUS AND DARK.

It was late at night, and Leon de Bournay and his esquire had just come in from the river. The doors had been locked, and they sat down to consult awhile before retiring. Since his master had seen Lulah, on the night before, Gabriel had been more anxious than ever. He foresaw evil, and only evil.

"My dear master," he said, in earnest tones, "if you would but listen to me one moment."

"I always listen," replied Leon, with a smile.

"But I want you to listen seriously. May I speak?"

"Of course you may."

"Then, my master, let me turn your thoughts upon our own Normandy. Will you think for a moment of the many fair dames in that sweet land who would gladly link their destinies with yours? And are they not worthy? Say—are they not worthy?"

"Yes, Gabriel."

"Then why not go and find some one there to love?

Why throw yourself away upon the baseless hope you are now trying to foster? Ah, my dear lord, if you would but pause and reflect."

"I have listened to you, Gabriel; but you cannot influence me in this. You know not how deep is the purpose of my soul, if you think any argument could turn me from it."

"But," urged the esquire, "I do not want to argue. I only want to open your eyes. You will not see your own danger. I tell you—and I tell you truly—you will not escape from the next snare so easily as you did from the last. There is a storm coming which must prove fatal if you remain in Cordova."

"Then let it come," cried the knight. "I have formed my purpose, and—"

He was cut short in his speech by the sound of a knocking at the outer door. Gabriel started to his feet in an instant, and trembled with alarm.

"Hark!" he uttered. "Did you hear that sound?"

"Yes. It was at our door."

"And who can it be at such an hour? O, my master, it is some evil. Ha!"

The knock came again, and de Bournay was upon the point of opening the casement to look out into the street, when he heard a crash, as though a side of the house were coming down.

"They have forced the door!" cried Gabriel, drawing his sword. "By Saint Paul, the hour has come!"

"Stand your ground," said de Bournay, at the same time grasping his own sword. "If they are enemies, let them find us here. By heavens, they shall find it no easy task to overcome us!"

Gabriel did not speak further, for the tramping of heavy feet was heard upon the stairs, and soon followed a rush upon the corridor; and, as the knight drew back towards an angle of the wall, the door of his apartment was burst open, and Miramolin, followed by half a dozen of his men, entered upon the scene. For a few seconds the host and the intruder regarded each other in silence. The robber chief was the first to speak:

"Leon de Bournay, I have come for you once more."

"Wherefore am I wanted?" returned our hero, with no outward show of alarm.

"Why should you ask such a question? Can you not guess?"

"Aye," cried the knight, grasping his sword more firmly; "I can guess. Miramolin would not seek me, save upon an errand of blood!"

"You have guessed rightly, Sir Christian. You remember what I told thee when I left thee upon the river's bank. I supposed you would be wise enough to leave Cordova at once; but, since thou hast remained, the consequences must be upon thine own head. Mark me—your hour has come!"

Leon had resolved that he would not be caught this time as he was before; but he was doomed to a most humiliating disappointment. His attention had been so entirely fixed upon the man who was addressing him, that he did not note what was passing in another quarter; and, ere he detected the movement, the fatal noose, cast by an unfailing hand, fell over his head, and was drawn tight around his shoulders. He made a struggle to keep his feet, but it was of no avail. Two stout men pulled him to the floor, and his sword was torn

from his grasp. Gabriel made a leap forward to save his master; and, being thus thrown off his own guard, he was in like manner overcome.

"Now," cried the robber chieftain, "let us convey them at once to the court, and there we can dispose of them at our leisure; and that, too, without leaving the tracks of blood in the house."

Accordingly the captive Christians were borne down into the court, with their legs and arms securely bound; and here de Bournay spoke. Thus far it had seemed almost like a dream—a terrible dream, surely, but still a dream. And then the force of his fall had served somewhat to bewilder him; but, as he reached the court, and saw the drawn swords about him, he realized the full meaning of his situation, and he deigned to sue for mercy.

"You will not slay me thus!" he cried. "You cannot do so cowardly a thing!"

"I cannot do otherwise," returned Miramolin. "Shall I stop your mouth for you?"

As the chieftain thus spoke, two of his men were engaged in putting a bandage about Gabriel's mouth, as the esquire had shown strong symptoms of crying out for help. De Bournay saw the movement, and he made a powerful effort to break the bonds upon his arms, but he made the effort in vain.

"Ah, Sir Christian, you cannot escape me now," the robber said, as he witnessed his captive's struggle. "My hold upon you is too strong. You will die where you are!"

"One word, my lord," spoke a stout Arab, approaching his chief, and touching him upon the shoulder.

"Let the knight be gagged, and then I would give thee a hint."

Miramolin seemed to place much confidence in the wit of the man who had spoken to him, for he at once gave orders to have de Bournay's mouth stopped; and it was speedily done.

"Now," resumed the Arab, "let us spill no blood here. It were better not to leave such marks behind us."

"But," interposed the chief, "they must die here."

"Aye—and so it shall be; but let us stop their breath. A cord about the neck will do the work!"

"Ha! by Allah, thou hast it!" cried Miramolin, bringing his hands emphatically together.

"Surely, that is the better plan. Yes, yes—we'll strangle them; and we'll do it right quickly, too! Let the cords be prepared at once. Slip them on, and draw them tight!"

Leon de Bournay heard all this, and yet he had not the power of resistance. He saw them come towards him with a stout leathern thong; and he made one more violent effort to free himself. He felt the noose drawn over his head, and around his neck. He tried with all his might to cry out, but only a stifled groan could he utter. The thong was fixed, and he felt it tighten—tighten—tighten—until his breath was almost stopped.

And should he die thus? It could not be. Even as the cruel cord eat into the flesh of his neck, he prayed for succor.

Hark! what sound is that? Some one is at the door—and the door is unfastened.

"Look to the door!" cried Miramolin. "Hold it but one moment!"

But this order was not to be obeyed; for, while the words were upon his lips, the door, or outer gate, was opened; and the light of new torches flashed upon the scene.

A cry of alarm broke from the robber chief as he beheld the captain of the royal guard, with a party of armed soldiers.

"In the dark, and out!" he shouted.

His men were used to his cry, and they obeyed him as he had meant. On the instant, they dashed down their lights, and sprang in a body for the door. The movement was so sudden, and so bold, that the soldiers had no time to resist them. In fact, the robbers were fairly gone before they were really discovered. Omar was upon the point of giving pursuit, when his attention was called to the two men lying bound upon the pavement. He found them to be the men he sought, and when he had set them free, he asked, with much wonder, what was the meaning of the strange scene he had witnessed. It was some minutes ere de Bournay could speak, so severe had been the pressure upon his throat; but finally he made out to inform the captain of the principal facts—how Miramolin, with a gang of his desperadoes, had broken into the house, and were about to put him and his servant to death. As may be supposed, Omar was much startled at this, and at once dispatched a man to the palace, with the intelligence that Miramolin was in the city.

"And now," said de Bournay, after the message had gone, "may I ask how it happened that you came so fortunately to my rescue?"

"I came from the king," replied Omar, "with orders to arrest both you and your servant."

"From the king?—to arrest me?" repeated our hero, with surprise. "And of what am I accused?"

"I know nothing about it, sir knight. My orders were peremptory, and I simply know that I am to bring you before the king. Will you go quietly, or must I use force?"

"Under any circumstances, sir, I should obey such an order readily; but especially would I obey it now, since your coming has saved my life."

Surely, thought the captain, this man can have been guilty of no crime. But he dared not say so, as he knew not what might have transpired. Still he treated his prisoner with great respect, and suffered him to walk at ease in the street as he conducted him along. Of course Gabriel made no resistance; and, before they reached their journey's end, the soldiers had conceived quite a liking for him.

When they arrived at the royal palace, our hero and his esquire were at once conducted into the presence of the king, with whom Baal Tamar was still in waiting. Abderahman was not a man of many words, so he at once came to the subject in hand.

"Leon de Bournay," he said, "do you know why I have sent for you?"

"Indeed, sire, I do not," the knight answered, with simple directness. He had betrayed no trepidation since coming into the royal presence, and he betrayed none now.

"Does not your conscience tell you the reason why? pursued the monarch.

"My conscience tells me only that which an honorable man may feel." As these words fell from our hero's lips a slight tremor was perceptible in his tone. He had involuntarily cast a glance upon the grand vizier, and the thought struck him that his arrest might have something to do with the lady Lulah.

"Then," said the king, "I must tell you the cause of this proceeding. It is whispered that there is a foul conspiracy going on in my capital. Have you heard anything of the kind?"

"No, sire," answered the knight. "I have heard nothing of the kind."

"Have you ever seen the mountain robber, Miramolin?"

"Yes, sire."

"Ah—where? how?"

"Where—in my house, and in the mountains. How—I will tell you if you will listen."

"Go on," said the monarch, plainly showing that he was puzzled by the Christian's frank, honest manner.

Upon this de Bournay went on and told of his adventures with the robber chieftain. He omitted nothing, from first to last. Both Abderahman and Baal Tamar were full of astonishment, especially at the account of the passage at arms with the giant Tarik.

"Sire," spoke the vizier, "I can corroborate one part of his statement—that relating to the slaying of the two robbers near the vine-dresser's cot."

"By Allah," exclaimed the king, "this begins to wear a strange aspect. Where is my captain?"

The captain of the guard was recalled, and when he

made his appearance, Abderahman asked him concerning the situation in which he had found the prisoners.

His answer was very plain and explicit; and it corresponded with the statement which de Bournay had made.

"I have sent squads of our guard in all directions," he continued, "to see if the robber can be found, though I fear the search will prove a fruitless one."

"You have done well, Omar. If you gain any intelligence of the robber, let me know at once."

After the captain had gone, the king turned again to the Christian knight.

"De Bournay," he said, "thus far you have made all appear fair; but still I have reason for detaining you. It would be useless to ask you further questions at this time, as the only grounds which have been presented to me upon which to found suspicion seem to have been broken down."

"Sire, may I ask thee a question?" returned the knight.

"Ask on."

"Have I been accused to you of any crime?"

"You have."

"And who is my accuser?"

"It is not my policy to tell thee that, sir Christian. As I shall detain thee, thou mayest have an opportunity of meeting him."

"You were told by him, whoever he was, that I had been with the mountain robbers?"

"Yes."

"Then, sire, I know my accuser well enough; for that information could have come but from one source."

"Ah,—you speak confidently, Christian."

"Because I am confident, sire."

"You may speak on," said the king, who seemed to grow more interested.

"Abu Zamar, governor of Cazalla, hath accused me," spoke de Bournay, with calm assurance.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I believe he is the only man who could have known that I was with the robbers; and, if I am not mistaken, he supposed I should never return."

"Ah—you speak in riddles, Sir Knight. Explain yourself."

De Bournay hesitated. He feared he had gone too far. He could not explain without accusing Abu Zamar of complicity with these very robbers, and that he dared not do; for he had no positive evidence, such as he could give to another; and, furthermore, the king would ill receive such an accusation against his favorite.

"Sire," he answered, after a moment's thought, "I cannot explain to you clearly. I speak from my own impressions. With a sense of the importance which such a statement may bear, I am free to confess that I may be mistaken."

At this point Baal Tamar spoke:

"Sire, would it not be well to let this matter rest for the present? Let us see the other party before we proceed further."

"Aye, good Baal—it is best as you say." And then turning to our hero, he added:

"I sincerely trust that you may clear your skirts of

this suspicion; but, for the time, I must hold you and your servant prisoners. You shall be well cared for."

"Sire, I only ask that I may face my accuser—that I may have a fair trial."

"You shall not be dealt with unjustly, Leon de Bournay—no more." As the monarch thus spoke he waved his hand, and the prisoners moved back.

Omar was now recalled, and directed to convey the two Christians to the prison; and also to see that they had as comfortable quarters as was consistent with safety.

So de Bournay and Gabriel were led away—out into the streets once more—away to the strong prison of Cordova—where they were delivered up to Beder Basim, the stout old jailer.

CHAPTER XII.

RATHER MYSTERIOUS.

"Baal Tamar," said the king, after the prisoners had been taken away, "what do you think of this?"

"I know not what to think, your majesty," replied the vizier in a troubled manner.

"But tell me," the monarch pursued, "had you, in all that led your mind to suspicion touching rebellion, any thought that the Christians were engaged in it?"

"No, sire, I had not. In fact I had no suspicion of any one in particular. I am confident—very confident—that there is a deep-laid, dangerous conspiracy going

on ; and I fear that some of our important officers are engaged in it. Even some of your own royal guard may be implicated. And yet I cannot fix an accusation upon any man."

"But of this de Bournay—what of him ? Can he be a conspirator ?"

"I cannot tell ; but, if I were to speak my simple impressions, I should say no. I have too much confidence in his honor."

"One thing more, Baal ; What do you make of the Christian's assertion touching our cousin Abu Zamar ?"

"Indeed, sire, I am puzzled by it. I cannot understand it. He was correct in his statement."

"So he was," responded Abderahman.

"And he seemed perfectly sure."

"Yes."

"And, furthermore," added the vizier, "I thought he hesitated in his explanation for fear of accusing the governor of Cazalla."

"So it struck me, Baal. By Allah, it is strange. Can it be that Abu has been working for the death of the Christian knight ? Can he have any cause for personal enmity ?"

Baal Tamar started, and fixed his gaze upon the floor. A new light was breaking in upon him.

"Sire," he finally said, "you have propounded to me a question which needs consideration and examination. Leave the matter in my hands, and on the morrow I will confer with thee further. If there be anything of the kind, I think I can find it out."

"If," said the king, in a hesitating, troubled mood, "Abu hath connived at the Christian's death, under

the circumstances before us, he must have had secret conference with the robbers of the Morena. By my life, I do not like to think that."

"Think nothing at present, sire. Let me investigate it."

"Well, well, so be it, Baal. It is late, and I will to bed, and try to dream of something pleasant." The monarch arose and walked half way across the room, when he stopped and pressed his hand upon his brow. "Of something pleasant, did I say?" he murmured, in a painful tone. "Alas! pleasant dreams are gone from my pillow forever! Time was when I dreamed pleasant dreams by day and by night—but—they are for me no more!—no more! O—why should I live?—why —why?"

With a quick step the old vizier advanced, and laid his hand upon his master's shoulder. Big, warm tears were rolling down his cheeks; for he loved his king, and his king's anguish moved him most deeply.

"Sire," he said in a touching, affectionate tone, "put these thoughts away. As the beautiful rose-tree awakes from the dread slumber of winter, and puts on its regal garb, and breathes forth its sweet fragrance with the coming summer, so shalt thou pay off this great grief, and once more bask in the sunlight of joy and peace."

"No, no, Baal!" groaned Abderahman, resting his head upon his minister's arm, "that can never be. The light of my joy has gone out forever!"

"I do not believe it, sire."

"Ah—you know not my heart, Baal. You know not how I loved Ariadne—how I love her still! No, no—

I will not say that. It is not love now—it is the great agony of crushing that love !"

"Abderahman," returned the vizier, speaking in a tone of strange solemnity, "a new light is breaking in upon me. As Allah liveth there is a great mystery between thee and the joy thou hast lost. Ask me nothing now—I have too much upon my mind. But I will work for thee ; and I shall work in hope. I tell thee, there is a new light breaking in upon me. Let me follow it to its fountain-head. And, meantime, retire and sleep ; and dream, joyfully if you can—if you cannot, then dream hopefully."

The king gazed up into his vizier's face with a wondering look.

"Baal Tamar," he said after a pause, "if I did not love thee, and trust thee, I would press thee for further answer ; but it shall be as you say. I will now to my couch, and wait for thee on the morrow."

"So be it ; and may all good spirits guard and bless thee."

When the vizier left the royal palace, strange thoughts were crowding upon him—thoughts which he revolved in his mind, but which he dared not yet utter aloud. When he reached his own residence, he found some of his black servants up, and of them he inquired if any of the women were yet astir. They believed some of them were. He then directed a eunuch to go and see if the lady Lulah had yet retired ; and, if she had not, to convey to her the intelligence that her father wished to see her.

In a little while the eunuch returned with word that Lulah was still up, and would see her father in her

boudoir. Accordingly Baal Tamar repaired to the place designated, where he found his daughter reclining upon a sofa. She arose as he entered, and when he had taken a seat she again sat down.

"You are up late, my child," said the vizier.

"Aye," replied Lulah; "I have been out upon the river; and, upon my return, I felt more like reposing here, than like retiring to my couch."

"Perhaps you had something that you wished to meditate upon," remarked Baal, in a seemingly careless tone.

"Yes," said the maiden, "I had many things to meditate upon. Strange things you know, have happened of late."

"Aye—so there have," responded her father, with a nod of the head. He gazed down upon the floor as he spoke, and after a pause of some moments, during which Lulah regarded him with an earnest, inquiring look, he raised his head, and added:

"My child, I have come at this unreasonable hour to see you, because I have something of importance to ask of thee. Until within this hour the thoughts which lead to the coming questions have never entered my mind. Trust in your father's love—trust in his anxiety for thy welfare—and answer me accordingly."

"Speak on, my father," replied the maiden, her eyes moistening at this proof of her father's tenderness. "Ask what thou wilt, and I will answer thee truly."

"Then listen: First I would ask thee if, within your knowledge, Abu Zamar hath any cause for enmity against the Christian knight, Leon de Bournay?"

"Why do you ask me such a question?" returned Lulah, trembling violently.

"Because I would know whereof I ask. Your manner, my child, betokeneth that you do know something. Will you not answer me?"

"Yes, my father." She spoke more calmly, and seemed more at ease. "I think that Abu Zamar beareth much enmity towards the Christian, be the cause real or imaginary."

"You do?"

"I know it."

"Speak on, and tell me how you know it."

"Because he hath betrayed it to me. He hath sworn that if de Bournay did not leave Cordova, he would have his life. He swore thus in a fit of passion."

"This begins to give me light," said Baal Tamar, in an eager, anxious manner. "And now will you tell me further—for I would know all—will you tell me why Abu Zamar is thus angry with the Christian knight?"

"I should think you might guess that, my father," returned Lulah, trembling again.

"But I have reasons, my child, for not wishing to guess anything. Speak freely, and trust me. Why hath Abu Zamar this deadly enmity?"

"Because," said Lulah, still trembling, but returning her father's gaze, "he is jealous of Leon de Bournay. He knows very well that I do not love him—he knows that my dislike for him increases every time I see him—and he fancies that the Christian stands in his way."

"That is true, as you tell me?" returned the vizier, bending an earnest look upon his daughter.

"It is," she replied.

"There is another subject upon which I may at some time speak with you," Baal Tamar remarked, after a short silence; "but as it is late, and as I have now learned all that I at this time sought, I will ask no more."

"But, my father," interposed the maiden, "will you not allow me to ask a question?"

"Certainly."

"Then tell me—why have you sought this information? What has happened? Has Abu Zamar done harm to the Christian?"

"You seem deeply interested, Lulah."

"So I am. Leon de Bournay saved me from more than death; and I would know if that deed hath doomed him."

"You shall be answered, my child. It hath not doomed him. Abu Zamar hath not yet done harm to the Christian. Leon de Bournay is safe and well. Let that suffice for the present."

With this the vizier arose and left the apartment; and when he reached his own private room, where he was wont to attend to his most important business, he sat down, and bowed his head upon his hand.

"Surely," he murmured to himself, "light is breaking in upon me. I would not dare yet to speak to the king all I think—and still I fear 'tis true."

He had just spoken thus, and was upon the point of rising from his seat, when he was startled by a low footstep behind him, and upon turning he beheld a youth who was to him a stranger.

"Ha! Who art thou?" he cried, starting up, and drawing his dagger.

"Be not alarmed, my lord," the strange intruder replied, in calm, soft tones. "Surely you would not fear a youth like me."

"Fear thee?" exclaimed the vizier, gazing upon the apparition in wonder. "Before we speak of fear, tell me how you gained access hither."

"As I would gain access whither I chose. I came in by such ways as are known to me; and I came because I wished much to see thee. I came secretly, too, because I would not have others know of my presence."

"Now, by the mantle of the Holy Prophet," cried Baal, after regarding the youth a few moments longer, "I think I know who thou art. Thou art this Euric of whom I have heard."

"You are right, Baal Tamar. I am Euric."

For some moments the minister gazed upon the youth in silent astonishment. He had heard vague rumors of a mystic being—a youth in appearance—who had been seen in different parts of Cordova of late—whom no one knew, and who could never be found when sought by the officers. He had heard that the youth was a magician, and he had also heard that he was a geni, wandering about among men. At all events, there was mystery enough about the being, be he man or spirit, and the vizier moved back a pace as he gazed upon him. Presently, however, as the rays of the lamp shone more fully upon the intruder's face, Baal was startled by an expression which he detected there. First it was only an expression which he saw there; but, as he gazed, he saw more—he saw a whole face which was strangely familiar to him. There could be no mistake.

"Thou art Euric," he said, still gazing earnestly upon

the face before him; "but thou art more. What else art thou?"

"It is enough that I am Euric."

"No, no," cried the vizier; "it is not enough."

"Why is it not enough?"

"Because thou art more than that."

"How know you?"

"I have seen you before."

"Perhaps you may be mistaken."

"Ah, no—there can be no mistaking such a face. By Allah, I know it very well. I should have marked it among ten thousand. You cannot deceive me in this. Now tell me, who art thou?"

"For our present purpose, Baal Tamar, I am only what I appear. Let it rest at that."

There was a tone of conscious authority in the youth's speech, and his bearing was easy, and yet proud. All this served to increase the vizier's curiosity, and he seemed fairly beside himself with perplexity.

"In heaven's name," he exclaimed, "tell me who you are!"

"First, my lord, let me tell you why I have come, as that is of the most importance."

"Then tell me."

"I have come to ask that you will bear me company."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Bear thee company? To-night?" repeated Baal, in astonishment.

"Aye,—for that I came."

"And whither would you lead me?"

"That remains to be seen. For the present I would have thee go with me."

For a little while the vizier regarded the youth as he would have regarded a crazy person. Finally he answered—

"I should be most foolish to do such a thing. I know not your business, and neither do I know yourself. That is asking too much."

For some moments the youth gazed down upon the floor, in a thoughtful mood, with his fingers working nervously together. At length he said, in a low, careful tone—

"Baal Tamar, I am about to entrust thee with a great secret. It is a secret which I would not have even the walls hear. Will you sit down and listen?"

For a moment the thought of treachery dwelt in the vizier's mind; but as he gazed again into the youth's face, he resolved to trust him. So he sat down upon a sofa, and Euric sat down by his side. The mystic visitant gazed carefully around, into every nook and corner, as though to assure himself that no other listener was nigh; and then he bent his lips close to Baal Tamar's ear, and whispered the secret he would tell.

During the recital the vizier trembled like a wind-tossed reed, and when it was concluded he started up from his seat and strode across the floor.

"Great heavens!" he ejaculated, with his hand clasped, "can this be possible?"

"It is as I have told you," calmly replied Euric.

"But," gasped Baal, "who art thou that knowest these things?"

"Baal Tamar, you shall know all. Sit down here again."

The vizier tremblingly obeyed; and when he had resumed his seat, the youth whispered again into his ear. This time Baal started more wildly than before. It was as though a thunderbolt had burst upon his head He caught Euric by the arm, and gazed eagerly into his face.

"Do you see?" the youth whispered.

"Great Allah! yes!" fell from the vizier's lips. "O, my soul! how wonderful is this!"

"Are you satisfied?"

"Yes."

"And will you go with me?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then let us hasten at once, for there is no time to lose."

Baal Tamar bent his head for a few moments, as though in deep, absorbing thought, and then he arose and made the few preparations which were necessary for the object he had in view.

"If I could speak with my child," he said, hesitatingly.

"No, no," quickly returned Euric. "That must not be. Remember what is at stake."

"It is well," the vizier replied. "I am ready."

"Then we will away at once."

And by a secret way they went out from the house—the grand vizier with the mystic youth—out into the dark street—and away into a darker place.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE PRISON.

Before the conspirators broke up their meeting, Miramolin returned, and gave an account of the disappointment he had met with. Abu Zamar was fairly beside himself with vexation, and roundly cursed the fate which seemed thus to protect the Christian knight.

"Blame not me," said the robber; "for I did all that I could do. Had the captain of the royal guard been a very few moments later, he would have found his prisoners both dead."

"But," suggested Abu, "may not the rope have done its work? You did not stop to see."

"It is as I have told you," returned Miramolin. "The Christians are still alive; or, at all events, I saw them conveyed towards the royal palace alive. And I am very sure that Omar's men are out after me. I would not have come hither to make this report had I not been as anxious as any of you for the death of the Norman knight. He will undoubtedly be conveyed to the prison; and, if he is, you, my lord of Cazalla, must attend to him. You have free passage thither, and may easily find some means of silencing his tongue. So I leave the matter with you; and now I must make the

best of my way from the city, as my men are anxiously waiting for me."

Without waiting for further remark, the robber chief turned from the hall, and for some time after he was gone not a word was spoken. The old general, Hixem, was the first to speak :

"My lord," he said, addressing the president, but at the same time casting his eye around as though the idea was addressed to all present, "it appeareth to me that this Norman knight is most dangerous to our welfare. And yet I am free to confess that I see not how he may be easily disposed of. If he is slain in prison, new suspicions may be aroused in the mind of the king."

"Even so," responded Abu Zamar, pressing his finger upon his brow. "By the imps of Erebus, it hath happened most unfortunately for us."

And so thought others of the conspirators. The discussion was going on, when a message was received from Muza, the guardian at the outer gate, to the effect that Miramolin had just sent one of his men, with the intelligence that Leon de Bournay and his esquire had been conveyed to prison.

"Then," said Alhakem, the royal lieutenant, "he must die where he is. I dare not trust him in the hands of Baal Tamar to examine."

"You forget," interposed Abu Zamar, "that we have taken means to have the grand vizier put out of the way."

"No, my lord," replied Alhakem, "I do not forget; but I do much doubt the ability of Euric to do that which he hath promised. Even if he be honest—if he

meaneth unto us as he speaketh—he hath undertaken a task which he must find difficult of performance."

This doubt of the lieutenant's found much sympathy; but Cazalla would not listen. However, the matter was soon set at rest in a manner not at all anticipated. Hixem was upon his feet, urging the necessity of the utmost caution, when the door was opened and Euric entered. He advanced at once to the head of the hall, where sat the president, and signified his desire to speak. All were silent in a moment as they saw the mystic youth before them, and eagerly listened to hear what he would say.

"How is it, Euric?" demanded Abu Zamar, with much anxiety.

"My lord," the boy-conspirator replied, "the work which thou gavest me to do is done!"

Abu Zamar clapped his hands with glad surprise, wnile the others bent eagerly forward to listen.

"How—how is it done?"

"Thus is it done," answered Euric: "I made my way to Baal Tamar's private room, and astonished him by professing to reveal to him a great secret. I made him believe I could take him directly to where all the evidence of our conspiracy lay. He accompanied me—we went out upon the street—away into a dark nook—where a hidden trap did my work. He will trouble us no more."

"By Allah!" cried the lord of Cazalla, "this bringeth us one step nearer to the consummation. With the shrewd old vizier out of the way we have gained much."

"Aye," responded Ismail; "thou speakest truly.

And now, if this dog of a Christian were as readily disposed of, we should have little to fear."

"Thou art right," said Abu. "Wait a few moments, and see if I have not a way to solve the trouble. Euric," he added, turning to the youth, "thou did'st once tell me that thou could'st make thy way whithersoever it might please thee."

"Aye, my lord," the boy replied; "though such things must be taken with some allowance. There are exceptions to all rules."

"I understand all that, my good Euric; but I hope there may be no exception to disappoint the hopes I have just entertained. Can you gain entrance to the prison of Cordova?"

"I think so," was the quick, calm reply.

"Ah—you can?" exclaimed Abu, hopefully.

"Yes, my lord."

"And when?"

"Not by daylight, surely."

"Of course I did not expect that."

"Then," added Euric, "we must call it the night of the coming day. The present night is already well spent."

"I know," said Abu, at the same time casting his eyes up at an open window in the roof, through which he could see several bright stars. "The rolling of the heavens admonishes me that it is time we were on our way home; but this matter shall be disposed of first. On the coming night you think you can make your way into the prison?"

"I am sure of it."

"The Norman knight, de Bournay, is confined there."

"I heard of it, my lord."

"Ah—how?"

"Baal Tamar told me."

"Yes, yes—I see. Well, this Christian must be disposed of. Do you think you could make your way to his dungeon?"

"I think so."

"And could you set him free?"

"I am very sure that I can open a way for him, my lord."

"That is enough," replied Abu. "I suppose I could gain access to his place of confinement; but, though I might open his prison door, I am sure he would not come forth at my bidding. But with you, Euric, it would be different. Will you see him to-morrow night?"

"I will, my lord."

"At what hour?"

"At midnight."

"Then I will see that faithful men are ready to meet him. He will be glad enough to escape from that prison; and he may promise himself, if he comes out thence, that no earthly prison shall ever restrain him again. I think it is all understood?"

"It is, my lord," returned the youth, promptly. "On the next midnight I will be with Leon de Bournay, and the prison doors shall be thrown open for both him and his esquire."

"That is good—and it is right. We shall depend upon you."

As Euric bowed, and drew back, Abu Zamar turned to his companions, and bade them be of good cheer.

"Thus," he said, "do we almost behold our last trouble swept away. When the Norman knight shall have been met and disposed of, and the king shall know of his escape, then shall we have a clear field. The blow must be soon struck. Just at this time the king is down-hearted, and has little energy. We must not give him time to revive."

A few more words were spoken—words of caution and encouragement—and then the conspirators separated. They went out, one by one, dissolving into the darkness like airy spectres, and when the morning dawned they were sleeping soundly, or else moving about like honest men.

Beder Basim, the jailer, or keeper, of the great prison, was a stern old man, of a stout, iron frame, and swart face, who had been at his responsible post for four-and-twenty years. An important man was Beder Basim, and many were the deeds which he did in secret for his king. Not bloody deeds—for Beder dipped not his hands in gore—but the solving of many a deep problem, and the reading of many a mystic scroll, had Beder Basim accomplished through simple tact in handling his prisoners.

When Leon de Bournay and Gabriel were conducted to the prison, Beder was informed by the officer who had them in charge that the prisoners were to be kept secure—no more—no less. They were imprisoned for no crime, but only on suspicion. So the old jailer led them away to the far end of a long corridor, where he lodged them in a cell which was both dry and airy; but it was a strong one, nevertheless; the walls being of thick, hard stone, and the door of solid brass. High up

towards the roof there was a small window, guarded by bars of steel. A bed of clean straw was upon the floor, and after conversing a while upon this last strange event, master and man lay down and slept. It was broad daylight when they awoke, and upon arising they discovered that a small closet was connected with their cell, in which were the necessary arrangements for bathing. By and by Beder Basim came with food, and our hero ventured to ask him if he knew how long they were to remain there.

"I know nothing," replied the jailer, shaking his head. "You were given into my charge, and I am to keep you until the king calls for you." And with this he left the cell.

The day passed, and when the night came, and the dungeon was shrouded in thick darkness, Gabriel began to worry.

"Surely, my master," he said, "we have no escape from this. The end is nigh at hand."

"I have no serious fears at present," returned the knight. "On the contrary, I believe the signs are in our favor."

"In our favor?" repeated the esquire, in surprise. "If you can find hope in any of our present surroundings, you can do more than I can."

"I am a believer in signs," said Leon.

"So am I," added Gabriel; "and it appears to me that the signs are very bad."

"Not so, my good Gabriel. I think they are very favorable. Let us look: In the first place, our enemies had us in the mountains, where death seemed inevitable; but what was the result? Surely, it was a won-

derful deliverance. Next, the robbers came, and death seemed inevitable again. In fact, when those ropes were about our necks, our lives were scarcely worth praying for. But what was the result? A mandate from the king came just in season to save us. And that mandate hath brought us hither. So, though we are now in prison, yet hath our imprisonment thus far been our salvation. Hence, Gabriel, do I take hope."

"In truth, my master," returned the esquire, after some deliberation, "your reasoning hath sense in it, and it lacketh not philosophy. I hope all may turn out for the best."

A little while after this the prisoners stretched themselves upon the low bed, but ere they were fairly asleep, Gabriel was aroused by a noise at the door. His master heard it at the same time, and started up.

"What is it?" he asked, rubbing his eyes, which had been pretty heavily closed.

"It is at the door," replied the esquire. "Somebody is coming in."

As he spoke the door was carefully opened, and as de Bournay sprang to his feet he beheld the same strange youth who had appeared to him once in his study. The visitor had a lantern in his hand, and having closed the door behind him, he turned to our hero.

"So, Leon de Bournay," he said, "we have met again. Speak not too loud," he added, placing his finger upon his lips, "for these walls sometimes tell strange tales."

The knight gazed upon the youth with wonder, but he made no reply.

"I told you I should see you again," Euric resumed,

setting his lantern down; "but perhaps you did not expect to see me here."

"I expected nothing," said Leon, nervously.

"You had not forgotten me?"

"No,—I could not do that. I have thought of you much."

"And I suppose you have been wondering who and what I could be."

"You are right. I have wondered much."

"As many others do," said Euric, with a smile. "But," he pursued, in a serious tone, "the time may come when some shall wonder more in knowing the truth than they now wonder in their perplexity of curiosity. However, we have no time to waste upon that point now. Listen, and you shall soon know what this visit means. You have been accused of conspiring against the king."

"Yes," replied de Bournay, attentively.

"And you have been imprisoned to await a trial."

"Yes."

"And you have, at least, one powerful enemy at work against you."

"I have."

"And a most deadly enemy he is."

"I am aware of it."

"And you must be aware of one thing further. Your position is a dangerous one."

"It is not so safe as I could wish it," replied Leon, after a moment's pause.

"I am assured of that," pursued Euric, "and hence have I come to you at this present time. How I gained access here, or how I propose to leave, it matters not.

Suffice it for me to say, that I go whithersoever I please. Furthermore, it matters not why I should seek to befriend you. I have my reasons for it, and to me they seem good. I have come to set you free."

"To set me free?" cried the knight, starting with surprise.

"Aye—to set thee free."

"But—how?—wherefore?" asked Leon, scarcely comprehending what was meant.

"I have come to open thy prison doors; and, when they are open, thou mayest go whithersoever it pleaseth thee. Why I do this, is not for thee to ask. The case stands simply thus: Thou art in prison, and thy life is in danger. I now offer to thee the means of escape, safe and sure. Come—there is no time to lose."

Our hero gazed a moment into the youth's face, and then he walked across the dungeon. That his strange visitor meant what he said he had no doubt; but still he did doubt the propriety of such a move.

"What say you?" demanded Euric, with a show of anxiety.

Leon took another turn across the dungeon, and looked into Gabriel's face to see what answer he could read there. The esquire knew the question his master would ask, and he shook his head. Finally the knight stopped before his visitor, and after regarding him for some seconds with a thoughtful look, he said—

"Fair sir, I do not question your motives, nor will I doubt your good intentions. Let all that pass. Be your object what it may, I at least perfectly understand your proposition, and I frankly tell you that I cannot accept it."

"Cannot," repeated Euric, in surprise. "Will you not embrace the opportunity for escape which I thus freely hold out to you?"

"I cannot," answered de Bournay, slowly and emphatically. "I have been accused without a cause, and I will meet my accuser before the king. If I were guilty, I would gladly escape; but I am not guilty, and this seeming proof shall not be brought against me."

"But," urged Euric, "you know not that you will meet your accuser. You know not what may be brought against you."

"I know that I shall see the king," replied Leon; "and in his justice will I trust! I have made up my mind, and my purpose cannot be shaken. I will not go out from here like a frightened thief, with the suspicion of a foul crime clinging to my fame. I have been accused, and I will have my trial."

"In this you are fixed?"

"I am."

"Then," said Euric, turning and picking up his lantern, "I have no more to say. I believe you are not one to be easily moved from a fixed purpose, and I shall not try to move you. I would have set you free; but, since you will not, I must go without you. Still, I am sure we shall meet again." With this he turned and left the cell, and locked the door after him.

"Good Gabriel," said the knight, after the mystic visitor had gone, "would you have gone out?"

"No, no, my master," was the esquire's ready answer. "By Saint Peter, I believe we are safer here than we should be following him. If there is a con-

spiracy, he's into it, soul and body. There's no mistake about that."

"I think so, too," said Leon.

"And," pursued Gabriel, "if such is the case, then I don't think we'd be very safe in his company."

"Certainly not. But, Gabriel, who is he? Where have we seen him before?"

Ah—there was the deeper mystery—one which they could not possibly solve. And how gained he admission into the prison? How did he make his way through such massive barriers?—how escape the vigilance of the ever-watchful sentinels? Aye—how?

"He's a demon," said Gabriel, crossing himself.

"He is at least a strange being," rejoined de Bournay.

"A demon, as sure as fate," persisted Gabriel. "They often take just such fair, youthful forms."

As the knight had no desire to enter upon a discussion of demonology, the conversation was dropped, and they once more lay down upon their bed of straw.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KING IN THE TOILS.

Great was the consternation of the king when he knew that his grand vizier was missing. By the middle of the forenoon he was informed of the fact; but it was not until late in the day that he could bring him-

self to believe that foul play had been used. Then he called his guard, and went in person to his minister's palace, where the matter was investigated. He saw Lulah ; and he saw the servants who had been last with their master ; and, from all that he could learn, he was painfully convinced that Baal Tamar had fallen. When he returned to his own palace, he found Abu Zamar waiting for him. The lord of Cazalla seemed in great distress, and was pacing to and fro like one in deep trouble.

"Alas, sire," he cried, as the king entered, "what is this I hear! My heart aches, and my eyes are dim with tears! Upon what evil have we fallen! Let me weep with thee! Let me pray with thee!"

As he spoke he fell upon the king's shoulder, and his tears fell over the king's garments. And Abderahman loved his favorite again, and felt the old confidence revive.

"Abu," he groaned, "they have taken away my best counsellor from me!"

"I know it, sire ; and I have feared it."

"Feared it, Abu?"

"Have feared the evil stroke, sire,—not the death of Baal Tamar, but something as bad. And yet, when we reflect, it seemeth reasonable that the first blow should have been struck in that direction. Our enemies must have known that the vizier was upon the watch. Alas! woe is me!"

"I fear he is dead!" the king said.

"I am too sure!" responded Abu.

"But—how could he have fallen?"

"Do you not guess, sire?"

"I cannot."

"Then come—let us sit, and I will tell thee what I have learned. This thing has made me weak."

The king sat down, and when the lord of Cazalla had taken a seat near unto him, the latter resumed:

"Since I saw thee last, my beloved monarch, I have learned some things which have served to open my eyes to more light than was before apparent. Early this morning, on the road to Cazalla, I found a man dying. I stopped, with my followers, and soon found that the fellow was one of the mountain robbers, who had been wounded in a skirmish, and had been left by his companions to pick his way alone. We bore him to a cot by the wayside, and before he died he made to me a revelation which astounded me. Upon my life, I can hardly find words to tell it."

"Go on—go on," whispered the king, who was eager and excited.

"I will go on, sire, even though my heart bleed in the recital. As I told you, the dying robber made a confession to me. Last night, with a dozen companions, he followed Miramolin from the mountains, and, at a safe hour, they met at the dwelling of the Norman knight, Leon de Bournay. They were there in deep consultation upon a plot for overturning our government, when a spy brought in word that the captain of the king's guard was coming. The first proposition was, that all should flee; but the Christian was more witty. He would rather it should appear that the robbers were his enemies; so he caused them to blind him, and make preparations as though for strangling him. This was done, the robbers being ready to leap forth into the street the moment the

guard entered. And thus did the arch enemy think to blind us all. But, thanks be to the fate which seems destined to preserve us, the scheme has been opened to me."

"Great Allah!" gasped the monarch, who had no thought of doubting the governor's word, "it is wonderful!"

"Aye," resumed Abu, wiping his eyes, as he forced new tears forth; "but the thing that is to come is more than wonderful. It is horrible. But, sire, before I tell it, I must ask of thee one favor."

"Ask what you please, good Abu."

"It is simply this, your majesty: That you will not tell to the lady Lulah that which I am now about to relate."

"You have that promise.'

"Then, sire, listen. Your heart will ache, as did mine, and your eyes may grow dim with tears, even as mine did. The robber was dying, and yet he had more to tell. I brought wine for him to drink, and so revived him that he was able to sit up. And then he told me thus: After the robbers had fled from Leon de Bournay's residence, they repaired to the palace of the vizier, where they lay concealed until Baal Tamar came home. Then they called him out, upon a false pretense, and —O, sire, the words stick in my throat!"

"Mercy! mercy!" groaned the king, covering his face with his hands. "I know what you would say!"

"You must know," added Abu Zamar, covering his own face, and sobbing. "They drew him from his house—they enticed him to his own garden—and there they strangled him—and fastened heavy stones to his

body—and took him away in a boat—and sank him beneath the bosom of the Guadalquiver! O!—weep for me, sire; for the fountain of my own tears is well nigh exhausted!"

For some moments Abderahman was so bowed with grief that he spoke not a word; but finally he recovered so far from the shock that he could give his attention to the matter which lay at the bottom of all this trouble.

"Good Abu," he said, laying his trembling hand upon his favorite's arm, "did the robber speak further before he died?"

"A few words more, sire. He spoke a few words—and then he died—died in such agony as I pray Allah I may never witness again."

"And of this conspiracy, Abu—did you learn more of that?"

"Not so much as I could have wished. I only learned that the Christians throughout Cordova were leagued with the mountain robbers, and that they were looking for help from the North. But, sire, I am on the track, and I will sift this thing to the bottom if my life is spared. They may have their evil eyes fixed upon me—I know that Leon de Bournay has marked me for his victim—but my life is my sovereign's, and I carry it upon the point of my sword. The leading spirit of the conspiracy is already in prison."

"You mean the knight of Normandy?"

"Yes, sire."

"Aye—he is safely locked up, Abu."

"Then there let him remain until I can get some clue to those who are in his confidence."

"But why not put the dog to the rack at once?" cried the king.

"Not yet," replied Abu. "He is not the man for the torture. I think he would die ere he would reveal anything. Let him remain where he is, and I will soon find one of more pliant stuff."

The king arose from his seat, and commenced to pace the floor. He walked with a slow and thoughtful tread, ever and anon raising his eyes and casting a glance upon the young lord of Cazalla. If Abderahman had ever had a thought of doubting the entire devotion of his favorite, he had none now. All his old love returned, and he questioned not a thing which Cazalla had told to him. He was bowed and broken in spirit, and the bruised heart clung to the prop which had thus presented itself. By and by he sat down, and laid his hand upon the governor's arm.

"Abu Zamar," he said, with much emotion, but yet with the calmness of a fixed purpose, "my prime minister—he in whom I placed all my confidence—is dead; dead, too, in the hour when I need my vizier the most. This place must be filled. I have thought upon it, and my choice is fixed. Thou shalt take Baal Tamar's place."

"I—I take the place!" cried Abu, with well feigned surprise. "Are you in earnest, sire?"

"Most assuredly I am."

"But, my beloved king, I am not worthy to wear Baal Tamar's honored mantle. I am not old enough; I have not had experience enough. Heaven knows I would serve thee, even to the death; but—this—this—overwhelms me."

"Offer me no objections, Abu," interposed the king, decisively. "My mind is made up. I have said it, and so it shall be. Thou art my vizier, and into thy hands do I give my best interests. Thou art old enough to have a true heart; and as for thine ability, I have full confidence in it."

"But, Cazalla, sire, is thus left without a governor."

"We can easily find one, Abu. Do you not think of some one whom you could recommend?"

"Aye," replied the sheik, after reflecting a moment. "There is your old general, Hixem. He has been on service much in Cazalla, and knows the people."

"And Hixem shall be governor of Cazalla," said the monarch, emphatically. "And," he added taking his companion by the hand, "Abu Zamar is henceforth my grand vizier."

"Sire," returned Abu, bowing his head, as though in the deepest emotion, "this great honor hath entirely overcome me." A little while he remained thus, and then he looked up and continued: "But I will not refuse the place. My great love for thee makes me believe I can serve thee. Chide me if I go wrong—correct me if I am at fault—and help me with thy kindness and confidence, to do my duty."

"Good Abu," cried the king, seizing the sheik again by the hand, "we will work together. I know I have thy love, and thou shalt surely have all my confidence."

At this point Abu Zamar professed to be so much overcome that he started up and went and leaned his brow against the wall. By and by he came back and resumed his seat.

"Sire," he said, "I am calm now, and I feel that Allah

will give me strength to serve you well. I accept the office, and the future shall tell you how thankful I am. But, in view of this change in my affairs, I must move to your capital and find a residence here."

"Aye, Abu; I have been thinking of that very thing; and I have it all planned. Baal Tamar hath no wife living, and the Lady Lulah is his only child. She is to be thy wife, and all that property is to be thine. By Allah, thou shalt take possession at once."

"But not marry at once, sire?"

"Be that as you please. Of course the maiden should have time for mourning; and yet, thou hast been so long affianced, that she may almost be looked upon as thy wife now. At all events Baal Tamar's palace is thine, and his private papers must be turned over to thee. I will give thee an order to his chief scribe, and thus the key will be in thine own hands. Touching the maiden—do as you please."

"At some future time, sire, I may speak to thee touching this subject."

"Speak now, Abu."

"It is a simple matter, your majesty. Perhaps you have heard that the Norman knight, during one of his excursions to the mountains, saved the lady Lulah from the grasp of some of his robber companions."

"I have heard something of it."

"Well—I fear that the maiden hath been influenced to love this adventurer. She hath almost avowed it unto me."

"Ha! Say ye so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then, by Allah, she must be cured of her folly."

"If you will leave her with me, sire, I will cure her. As my wife she will soon come to herself."

"Be it as you will, Abu. From this hour the matter is in thine own hands."

"And now," said the new vizier, "let us proceed at once to place a seal upon our business, for I would be at work. It is almost night, and I hope, ere the dawning of another day, to gain much more light upon the secret of the conspiracy."

This suited the king, and he forthwith proceeded to invest Abu Zamar with the badge of the new power he had granted unto him. Baal Tamar's old scribe was much surprised when he received the order to turn over all important papers in his possession to Abu Zamar; but he dared not disobey.

At length the former lord of Cazalla sat in the private room of the grand vizier, and thus did he speak with himself:

"By my life of lives, and by my soul of souls! had an angel direct from the Prophet, foretold this, I could not have believed him. Mercy! who could have dreamed it! Surely the king is demented. His troubles have turned his brain. When the sun arose this morning my highest hopes looked not so high as this. I had only hoped to so warp the circumstances of the day as to retain some hold upon the king's confidence. But—the fates are with me. All is now safe and sure. By the Prophet, but I'll soon have the crack-brained monarch by the ears!—I'll wear that crown of his!—Aye, I'll wear it upon my brow, and be king of Cordova—be sovereign of all Spain! And," the ambitious rebel continued, starting up and striding

across the floor, "I'll wear another jewel! The fair Lulah shall be mine; but she holds not the first place in my harem. No, no, the fairer Ariadne shall bless me with her love! This labor shall not be all in vain. Thus far have I succeeded most bravely, and the end shall not fail me. When Abderahman is dead, I'll bring the beautiful Ariadne forth from her prison-house, and she shall be mine—all, all mine!"

And so had the villain been plotting for many months. Aye—ever since the king had made Ariadne his wife, had Abu Zamar been plotting for this great revenge. He had loved the fair one, but Abderahman knew it not. The maiden turned him coldly away upon his first advance, and there the matter had, apparently, dropped. Ariadne never thought it worth her while to recall the circumstance; and Abu Zamar kept it secret from policy. So the king, when his queen was accused, had no clue to the motives of her accuser.

An hour past midnight Abu Zamar put away the parchment rolls he had been examining, and glided stealthily out from the palace, and ere long afterwards he was with his brother conspirators in their secret retreat. In a few words he told them what had transpired, and the effect was as he had anticipated. They were elated beyond measure, and looked on success as now certain.

In a little while Euric entered, and told of his visit to Leon de Bournay, and its result, relating carefully the reasons which the knight had given for not leaving his prison.

"I might have expected this," said Abu Zamar. "The Norman is shrewd. But it matters not now. It

is better as it is. In my new office I have unlimited power over the prisoners, and I shall see that we have no further trouble from him. My brothers, it is well as it is. Fortune favors us."

"Aye—fortune favors us," repeated Hixem, who, on the morrow, was to receive the dignity of governor of Cazalla.

And so thought the others.

"Aye," muttered Euric to himself, as he glided out from the hall "fortune doth surely favor us!"

CHAPTER XV.

MORE WORK IN THE PRISON.

In one of the strongest cells of the prison, with a high, barred window, and door of brass, sat Ariadne, the queen. She was a lovely woman, just in the morning of life, with beauty in every feature. She sat now upon a low cushion, with her face buried in her hands, and it was plain to see that she had been weeping; but she had wiped the tears away, and their traces were soon gone. As she sat thus, she heard some one approach, and presently the door of her cell was opened, and, as she arose to her feet, she met the gaze of Abu Zamar. She was somewhat startled at first, but the emotion was soon overcome, and she looked upon the visitor with calm dignity.

"Ariadne," said Abu, in a soft, tender tone, "it

grieveth me deeply to see thee suffering here, and I have resolved to free thee from thy durance."

"Thou, Abu Zamar?" returned the queen, regarding him with surprise.

"Aye, thou fairest of the fair—*I* can do it."

A shudder was perceptible in the frame of Ariadne as she met the earnest gaze of Abu, and, for a moment, she turned her face away.

"My lord," she finally said, moving to her seat, and folding her hands upon her bosom, "there is no need that I should ask you many questions. What you have to communicate you can do as you please."

"And I will do it at once, sweet lady," returned the visitor, taking a seat as he spoke, and bestowing another admiring glance upon the lovely prisoner. "In the first place, I am grand vizier of Cordova." He waited, as though he expected some sign of astonishment at this; but he was disappointed, for, in the coolest manner possible, the queen said—

"Aye—I knew it."

"Knew it? You? And how?

"The jailer told me."

"By my soul, but Beder Basim is free with his communications."

"Was it not natural that he should acquaint me with the particulars of so important a matter?"

"Certainly—certainly," replied Abu, recovering himself. "I meant no blame, only I was disappointed, as I had hoped to be the first who should break to you the glad tidings."

"*Glad tidings*, my lord?"

"Aye, Ariadne, for so they are. I have now great

power in Cordova, and it shall be wielded for your benefit. You shall not long remain in this cruel confinement."

"And can you influence the king in my favor?"

"Do you ask that question seriously?" said Abu, with much apparent earnestness.

"What else should I ask, my lord?"

"You should rather ask if I can change demons of Erebus into angels of light! Ah, Ariadne, you little know the heart of Abderahman, if you imagine that any tenderness towards yourself can be kindled therein. He has more than once been upon the point of ordering you into the hands of the executioner, and it has only been my earnest endeavor that has saved you. Hark! what noise was that?"

"I heard nothing, my lord."

"But I did. I heard it distinctly."

"O—I see now," returned the queen, casting her eyes towards the high window. A vampire has made it his home here with me—he generally hangs against the casing of the embrasure, and you have frightened him away."

Abu Zamar gazed up at the point thus indicated, and after listening a few moments more, he seemed satisfied, and resumed—

"As I was saying, I have saved thee, Ariadne, even at the risk of my own peace and welfare, and I will save thee yet further. Thou shalt be to me as the apple of mine eye—thou shalt be as my own soul—as my own life! Sweet one, why shall I hide my heart? Why cloak the deepest emotion I ever felt? I have saved thee because I loved thee, and I will set thee free from

this prison because I must possess thee for mine own!" As he thus spoke, he arose from his seat and moved towards the fair prisoner, with his arms outstretched. She uttered a low cry, half of fear and half of warning, at the same time starting up, and gliding back to the wall.

"Hold, my lord!" she said, with so much of authority that the man stopped as though he had been held by some unseen force. "This is most unseemly. You surprise and confound me. In mercy's name, bear with me. Give me time for reflection."

"Thou shalt have plenty of time," cried Abu, who had feared a stern, uncompromising repulse, and was hence much relieved by the easy bearing of the woman he sought to bend to his will. "If I have seemed in haste, set it down in behalf of my great love, and pardon me. O—I cannot tell how deeply I feel. Words cannot paint the all-absorbing love that consumes me. I will save thee—will lead thee forth from this prison—will place thee in the noblest station of wealth and honor, if thou wilt only love me in return."

Ariadne sank down upon her seat, and bowed her head upon her hands. Her frame shook convulsively, and for some moments she seemed to be almost overcome; but finally she looked up, and spoke quite calmly:

"Abu Zamar, I know not what to say unto thee. I am not wholly myself. Thy speech hath come upon me so suddenly—so strangely—that it leaveth me without the power to reply."

"Sweet Ariadne, take thine own time for consideration, only let my great love be uppermost in thy

thoughts. If you could see my heart, you would not seek time for further consideration."

"Ah," replied the queen, shaking her head, "it is my own heart that troubles me. Alas! it hath been so bruised of late that its affections are well nigh crushed out. Ere I give answer to your marvelous speech, I must know my own soul."

"You shall have the time, dearest one. Only let me feel that you are thinking of me."

"I shall not fail to do that. But tell me, Abu, whither canst thou take me when I go out from this place? Where canst thou lead me that I shall be safe from the fury of the king? Have you thought of this?"

The vizier hesitated. Should he tell the queen that he expected to be himself king of Cordova? No—he dared not.

"Let not that thought trouble you, sweet one. I have plans laid, and they are safe ones, too. You have no cause for fear."

"It is a bold undertaking, Abu."

"I know it is, and love such as mine might make a coward bold. But you shall think of it. When I come again I may have the whole plan perfected, and then thou shalt know all."

"I shall think much."

"And I only hope that thy thoughts may lead thee to love much."

"We shall see."

When Abu Zamar had left the cell of the traduced queen, and was alone in the corridor, he stopped and spoke with himself:

"By Allah, things prosper with me most wonderfully.

If I am not blind—if I am not befooled as man was never yet befooled—the queen is already to my will; but she is coy, and will not too readily surrender herself. Ah, I shall revel in pleasures when this work is done. And now to Alhakem—he will be waiting for me."

Connected with the great prison was a department, or suite of rooms, set apart for a detachment of the royal guards, and here, too, was an office which the grand vizier, as criminal judge, frequently occupied for the transaction of such business as might there be brought before him. On the present occasion Alhakem had charge of the guard at the prison, and Abu Zamar found him in his private apartment.

"I have been waiting for you, my lord," the lieutenant said, after the vizier had entered and closed the door.

"I supposed so, Alhakem, but I have been most effectually employed. Are we secure?"

"Yes. No one can interrupt us here."

"And then I think there are no nooks for eavesdroppers."

"None, my lord. I have taken every precaution."

"Then I have somewhat to say unto thee," pursued Abu, drawing a seat close to the lieutenant's side. "I have done much—much has been accomplished on all hands—and much yet remains to be done. Still, I can see our way clear, and I have fixed upon the day when the blow shall be struck.'

"Ah!"

"Yes—it is on the fourth day from this."

"Aye—I see," cried Alhakem. "It is the day on which the grand council convenes."

"Exactly. On that day all the grand dignitaries of the kingdom will be together, and the occasion will be most favorable. And, moreover, I shall have the arranging of matters, and shall thus be able to fix everything most favorably for our plans. The blow will be a most decisive one, and many shall fall without knowing the hand that smites them. The king falls first—then fall Omar and Beder Basim—and then sweeps the besom over the field wherever there is need. Still, Alhakem, there is one thing more that must be done at once. Abderahman is bound, I fear, to see this dog of a Christian whom we have shut up in prison here, and *he must not do it.*"

"Do you think de Bournay could influence the monarch, after what you have told him?"

'Yes—plainly—I do think so. There is no need that we should disguise facts from ourselves. Truth hath wonderful power; and the king hath a strange faculty of appreciating truth when he hears it from the lips of such a man as is this Norman knight. As matters now stand, Abderahman's attention is wholly turned upon the Christians; and so I would keep it, and, to that end, he must not see Leon de Bournay. And, further," pursued the vizier, after a thoughtful pause, "there is another danger in connection with this same matter. I apprehend that the Lady Lulah is resolved upon making her way to the king; and, if she does, she would certainly influence him to send for the Norman."

"Methinks, my lord, that you should look out for her," said the lieutenant, significantly.

"So I will—so I will; but I would have the knight looked out for at the same time."

"I am ready and willing to do my part," returned Alhakem. Abu Zamar started up and paced the floor for some time, with the ends of his fingers pressed tightly upon his brow. Suddenly he stopped, and sat down again.

"By the beard of the Prophet, good Alhakem, I think I have hit it!" he cried, bringing his fist down upon his knee. "Aye—I have it now! It shall appear that the knight and his esquire have taken their own lives. They saw that their crime was known—that exposure was sure, and the punishment inevitable; and, rather than submit to trial, and the shame of public execution, they committed suicide. So it shall appear. What think you of it?"

The lieutenant did not answer directly, but when he did answer, his tone showed that he thought most deeply.

"It is a good plan," he said. "It is safe and sure. But, would it not be well to forge some writing, that he shall seem to leave behind him?"

"I had thought of that," returned Abu, "and had planned to do it myself, as I think I can imitate his Norman hand very nearly. If we can find the men to do the work there can be no trouble."

"I can find them very easily," said the lieutenant. "Of the five-and-twenty men who will be on guard with me to-night, twelve, at least, are firm friends of our cause, and would gladly aid us in this."

"You are sure!"

She beheld, as her eyes became used to the light, a number of men, wild and savage looking, whose garbs resembled those she had seen before. They were of the mountain robbers! She knew it as soon as she saw them. She knew it from the garb they wore; from the lowering darkness of their grim visages; from the curious weapons that glittered upon their persons; and moreover she knew it from the strange character of the retreat in which she thus found them.

The maiden's imagination was painfully active, and her fearful fancy took another leap. She saw a man come out from among his companions, and approach the spot where she stood,—a man of middle age; with noble form and commanding mien; with a look half of ice, and half of fire; with the nose of an eagle; and with eyes that might vie with Erebus in depth of darkness. She knew—she felt it in her very soul—that this must be Miramolin, the terrible robber chieftain! It came to her as a reality, and no assertion could have made her more sure.

"Great Allah!" she gasped, seizing Abu Zamar by the arm, "what is this?"

"It is where I am to leave you," Abu replied. "And it is where you will be well cared for." He waved the advancing chieftain back with his hand, and then he added in a lower tone, made tremulous by deep passion, "You have reached the end of your journey, Lulah; and before we part, I must say one word. Once you were my affianced bride. I looked upon you as already mine, and the people of Cordova knew the bond there was between us. You chose to trample upon my love. In an evil hour you bestowed your affections upon an

adventurer—upon an infidel—and cast away forever the faith you owed to me. Now lady, I will leave thee here ; and the time to come shall show thee how much thou hast gained by thy faithlessness."

He turned immediately to the chieftain, and continued :

" Miramolin, I have brought the damsel unto you. Is the bond kept ?"

" Aye, my lord," replied the robber, gazing first upon the beautiful face of the maiden, whose veil had been swept back over her head, and then turning to the vizier ; " thou hast done nobly. And as my soul liveth within me, I, too, will keep the bond. You may depend upon me. Fear not, sweet lady," he continued, turning his gaze again upon the maiden. " I have loved thee a long time, and within this retreat thou shalt be most carefully nurtured."

" No ! no ! no !" shrieked the terrified girl, clinging wildly to Abu Zamar's arm. " Not this ! O, not this ! Take me back !"

" It is too late, Lulah !"

" Oh !—in Heaven's name ! spare me ! Do not so great a crime ! Take me home !"

" It is too late !"

" Fair lady," spoke Miramolin, " thou shalt be happy here."

Abu Zamar shook her grasp from his arm, and the robber chieftain took her to himself. She looked up, and saw the fierce gaze which came upon her from those burning eyes—she ealized the whole terrible truth—and her poor, crushed spirit could bear no more. With a

moan of anguish, such as can find its depth only in a broken heart, she sank back insensible.

"She has fainted," said the outlaw.

"So much the better," responded Abu. "You can now dispose of her without trouble; and, in the morning have her tame and submissive."

Miramolin spoke to one of his attendants, who quickly left the room, and shortly afterwards an old woman made her appearance. She was an Arab, of hard, harsh features, and generally passed for Abdalla's wife, though many years his senior.

"Here, Siloah," said the chieftain, addressing the new-comer, "bear this maiden to the chamber I have had prepared for her. And mark you—she is under your especial charge."

"She shall be cared for, my lord," replied the woman. And then, with a strength for which a well made man might have envied her, she lifted the insensible maiden in her arms, and bore her from the apartment.

"Now," said Abu Zamar, when he had an opportunity to speak with Miramolin alone. "I think everything is arranged. I may not see you again until we meet for our final concert."

"You will not, unless you come here," returned the robber. "On the morrow I shall make the lady Lulah my wife;—at midnight I will call my men together, so as to meet you in the capital at early morning. Of course, I shall find no difficulty."

"No," said the vizier. "Alhakem will see that a majority of our men are put on guard, so that your entrance will be easy. At the appointed hour a red flag will be hoisted upon the dome of the great mosque,

and then the blow is to be struck. Upon the appearance of that signal every arm will be ready."

"Mine shall be, at all events," pledged the robber, freely. "I understand my part, and I will perform it. So, while you are looking to your own work, you will feel no apprehensions of failure in my quarter."

Abu Zamar said he should feel perfectly easy; and, after some deliberations, and the reviewing of their most important plans, he started on his return to the city, and reached his palace some two hours before daylight.

Under the efforts of Siloah, the lady Lulah soon recovered from her swoon; but she shortly afterwards fell asleep, and awoke not again for many hours. When she arose from her pillow, she sat up and gazed about her. A lamp was burning on a table close at hand; but its rays were feeble, for, through some nook or crevice, somewhere, the brighter rays of a greater light were struggling in. As she rubbed her eyes, and pressed her hands upon her brow, she tried to think that she had been dreaming. She had had dreams—most fearful dreams—of late; and—might not this be only a dream!

Alas—no! Too soon did the fearful reality come upon her; and, with a deep, almost dying groan, she sank down again. Presently she heard the door open, and when she started up, she beheld an old woman standing close beside her—a dark, harsh-featured woman—whose face was familiar. In a few moments Lulah remembered her. She had been with her in the night, when she came out from her swoon.

"You have slept well," the new-comer said, in a

tone which, though not remarkable for kindness of accent, was yet softer than might have been expected from such lips.

"Who are you?" asked the maiden, gazing vacantly into the woman's face; for her thoughts were running far beyond the question.

"I am Siloah, and I have come to wait upon you, and care for you, and make you comfortable. Come, let me help you dress, and then you shall have such refreshment as you shall choose."

"Where am I?" pursued Lulah, with the same vacant stare.

"Why—you are in a good place. Don't you know where you came to last night?"

"Last night!" murmured the maiden, bowing her head a moment. "Oh! angels of Heaven, have compassion! I am—in the hands of—the mountain robbers!"

"There is no need of representing it exactly in that way," suggested Siloah, reprovingly. "You are not to be robbed nor hurt. You are in the hands of one who loves you too well for that."

O, how painfully the words fell upon the captive's ear! A groan of agony fell from her lips, and she pressed her hands over her aching heart.

"You mean—*Miramolin!*" she faintly gasped.

"Yes—I do mean Miramolin!" replied the old woman, quickly, and with an effort at pride. "I mean the bravest, and the best, and the greatest man that ever trod these mountains."

"But—what does he mean to do? Why am I here?" The question was asked after a long struggle—asked in fear and trembling.

"It isn't for me to say what my master means, fair lady. He must tell you that himself. I don't know anything about it. But come—it is time you had some nourishment. I will help you dress."

"Have I slept so long?"

"It is now almost noon."

"Noon!—almost noon!" repeated Lulah, gazing about her. "It is dark for such an hour."

"Aye—the sun don't get into this place very often. We are on the wrong side of the hill for that. But it is, as I tell you, almost noon. Shall I help you to dress?"

"I can dress myself," replied the maiden. "I would rather do it."

"Then I will go and prepare some food for you." And with this the old woman left the room.

Lulah had no desire to remain upon her couch, so she arose as soon as she was left alone, and having bathed in the cool water which stood ready for her, she put on her garments, and arranged her dishevelled hair. In a little while afterwards, ere she had had much opportunity for reflection, Siloah returned, bearing a large silver tray, upon which were bread and fruit, and coffee and sherbet. She would have gone out without speaking, had not the maiden detained her.

"Answer me one question," the poor girl plead, with her hands outstretched, and tears starting from her eyes. "What does the robber chieftain mean to do with me?"

"You must ask him," the woman replied. "Perhaps he will be here to see you before a great while."

"But—tell me—will they keep me here? Am I only a prisoner, or——"

"Don't ask me such questions, for I cannot answer you." Siloah turned towards the door as she said this, but ere she reached it, she stopped and turned back. "But," she added, in a lower tone, and with much meaning, "I may give you a little piece of advice that will not come amiss: Don't anger the chieftain! You had better die than awaken his wrath. But if you are reasonable, and treat him respectfully, no queen can occupy a more enviable position than may be yours. You had better remember what I have said."

Lulah asked no more, for she had heard enough. The words which had been spoken to her conveyed too much meaning—alas! too much! She ate some of the bread and some of the fruit, for she was faint and weak; but it was almost an involuntary act, for her thoughts were painfully busy in another direction. Could there be any mistake in the meaning of all she had seen and heard? She prayed that there might be, but she could not raise a hope so high. She tried not to think of what the future might bring—she tried to shut her eyes to the fearful prospect that loomed up from her present position. Yet the terror would come, and dark phantoms hovered about her. She had seated herself upon one of the raised cushions, and was gazing up towards the aperture where the daylight struggled in, when she was startled by a rap upon the door. She listened, but she did not move nor speak. Presently the door was opened, and the robber chieftain entered. Lulah involuntarily clasped her hands upon her bosom, for her heart seemed suddenly palsied as she recognized the terrible outlaw, but its pulsations were quickly resumed with painful force.

Miramolin stopped within a few feet of the maiden, and gazed earnestly upon her—gazed with admiration, but with a look of stern resolve that made that admiration dangerous.

"Fair lady," he finally said, in a tone very soft and persuasive, though far too cool and careful to be considered kind, "I am a plain-spoken man, and I shall not leave you long in doubt concerning the purpose for which you are here. I have seen you before you came here. I saw you a year ago, as you stopped at the cot of Alcassim, and rested there, and I have seen you since when your veil has been removed, and you thought you were unobserved. From the moment when first my eyes beheld you, I have longed to possess you. I loved you, and earnestly prayed that some kind fate might give you unto me. My p ayers have been answered. Abu Zamar has relinquished his right in my favor, and thou art now mine!"

Lulah did not speak, nor did she move, but she sat, like one dreaming some horrible dream, with her hands folded upon her knees, and her eyes fixed upon the man before her. She was pale as death, and seemed almost bereft of sense.

"As I said before," continued the chieftain, "I am plain-spoken, and I shall not keep you in suspense. In my own sphere I am supreme monarch, and my will is not to be questioned, so you will understand that what I have purposed must be accomplished. And, furthermore, dear lady, when I have work to do—when my plan is clearly laid out—I make all possible haste to its consummation. Thou art mine, and I am to care for and protect thee. Thou art mine from this moment,

but I will not make thee my slave. Thou shalt be my wife, fairly and lawfully, according to the rites of the Islam. Among my people there is a mufti who hath expounded the religious law in Bagdad, and he shall place the seal of *wife* upon thee !"

And still Lulah gazed upon the robber, and spoke not a word. The terrible agony had sealed her lips, and she sat like one entranced by an evil eye.

"One thing more," pursued Miramolin, in the same calm, decisive way, as though he were arranging for a matter of business that touched no human heart; "as circumstances now stand, it is necessary that our nuptials should be celebrated at once. I shall be soon called away—perhaps before the dawning of another day—and I would leave you in the dignity of the position you are to fill. I need make no farther explanation upon that point. In one hour I will be with you again, and bring the mufti with me. If you understand the matter, as I think you do, you will see what course will be most likely to conduce to your peace and comfort. Remember—in one hour !"

"Mercy ! mercy !" burst in startling tones from the poor girl's lips, as the chieftain turned away. She sprang forward and caught him by the arm, holding him with frantic power. "Oh ! in heaven's name ! Mercy ! mercy !"

"Remember— in one hour !"

Thus spoke the robber, sternly and uncompromisingly, and then, having shaken the small white hands from his arm, he left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ROBBER CHIEFTAIN'S NUPTIALS.

What should Lulah do? What could she do? Was she not wholly in the robber's power, far away from friends, with no one to help her? Could she avert the doom which hung so darkly over her? Could she, by any means within her power, stay the dread flood of evil that was setting upon her? She thought of all this, and she was forced to the most unwelcome of answers. With a burst of anguish she threw herself upon the couch, where she lay until she could lie no longer. Then she started up, and sought relief to her rended nerves in pacing up and down the room. The hour passed, and Siloah came into the apartment. She saw that the maiden was up, and, without speaking, she turned back again. In a few moments more the door was re-opened and Miramolin entered. He looked admiringly upon his captive, but yet there was a sternness upon his face which told too plainly of the purpose that was in his soul.

"Fair lady," he said, "the hour is up, and the time for our nuptials has arrived. The ceremony will be very simple—it will take but a few minutes—and then

we will commence to live a life that will be new to both of us."

Lulah clasped her hands—tottered forward a few steps—and sank down upon her knees at the robber chieftain's feet.

"In the name of mercy and of justice, sir, listen to me!" she cried, gazing up into his face with a look of deepest prayer. "Spare me this great sorrow! I have never harmed thee—I have never wronged thee. I am a poor, helpless child—an orphan now—I am weak and broken-hearted—bowed with heavy grief—and cast upon the dark sea of misfortune. Thou art strong and resolute, and can do thy will as it pleaseth thee. Be kind—be generous—spare me—and I will bless thee with my latest breath!"

The robber took the kneeling girl by the arm, and, with a strong hand, lifted her to her feet.

"Lady," he said, with one of those strange smiles which may be a thousand times more dangerous than the darkest frown, "you do not understand me. You are not yet fully acquainted with me; but you will know me by and by. Among my own men, when I have doomed one to death, he never asks for mercy; for he knows that my word is not to be broken. Thou art here to be my wife; and my arrangements have all been made. And now, you had better ask the sun to fall back in his course—ask this firm-set hill to leap from its rest—than to ask me to forego my purpose! Let me hear no more of it. We will be married now, and then you may ask mercy of your husband in welcome."

As he spoke he turned towards the door, and pres-

ently Siloah returned, followed by Abdalla and an old mufti, named Abd ul Wahab.

"Come," spoke the chieftain, after the new-comers had entered, "let us have done with this business as soon as may be. Abdalla and Siloah, thou art my witnesses. Abd ul Wahab, we are ready."

Miramolin took the maiden's hand, and made her kneel upon the carpet; and then he knelt beside her. She did not resist—she dared not; and, moreover, no such effort could have served her. She knelt, and bowed her head upon her bosom. Her vision was dim, and her brain reeled; yet she was conscious of what was being done. She knew that the robber was by her side, and that he held her right hand. She knew that the mufti had advanced, and that he mumbled over some passages of nuptial law. It did not need that she should make any response; though she could not have done it had such need existed. She heard the final sentence pronounced; and she knew that the work was done. Then she was lifted to her feet, and when she gazed around she found that she was alone with her master. The priest and the witnesses were gone.

"Now, lady, thou shalt have a few hours for repose," said Miramolin, leading her to a seat. "When the sun is gone and the shades of evening draw around us, I shall come to thee as I have a right to come. Thou art now mine—all, all mine—the first and only wife I ever took—and fair enough to make recompense for the years of loneliness I have passed. Rest now, and greet me fittingly when I come to thee in the evening!"

For a long time after the robber had gone, Lulah sat

like one spell-bound; but finally she started up, and cried out in her agony:

"No! no! no!—I am not his wife! No such unholy deed can be binding upon me! I am not! I am not!"

She stopped, and gazed out into the space before her, as though a horrible phantom had suddenly arisen there. Gradually her eyes drooped from their vacant stare, and her hands sank upon her bosom.

"Not his wife?" she whispered—the phanton was still before her, though she tried to shut it out. "Not his wife?" she repeated in a fearful tone. "Oh, my soul! what shall I be! I am lost! lost! lost!" And, as these last words broke from her lips, like the cry of one dying, she sank down upon the carpet, with her head reclining upon the low stool on which she had been sitting.

When Lulah was next aroused to a state of perfect consciousness, it was by the entrance of Siloah, who brought food and drink. The captive started up, and moved towards the tray which had been placed upon the table. She moved with sudden energy, like one who has some purpose.

"You have brought no knife," she said. Her voice trembled some, but still she spoke with wonderful calmness.

"What would you do with a knife?" the old woman asked, eyeing the maiden keenly.

"I would cut my bread, and cut my fruit. Such hath always been my habit."

"It is not our custom, my child."

"Yet it hath been mine, good woman; and I trust you will humor me. If you have no knife at hand, let

me take that dagger which you wear at your girdle. I will not harm it."

In truth Lulah spoke altogether too calmly. She made so much effort to hide her real meaning, that it became clearly apparent to the quick-witted Siloah.

"I cannot spare my dagger," the attendant replied; "and, moreover, it might be a dangerous thing in the hands of a child like yourself. Wait awhile, and if you need a knife I will bring one."

"Am I to be thus restricted?" cried Lulah.

"Not at all, my dear. Wait till your husband comes. He may grant all you ask. I am not ruler here."

The last hope was gone; and, as Siloah left the room, the poor girl sank down again. She could find no knife—no dagger—no weapon with which to defend her life from the great wrong! That life must be Miramolin's if she could not restore it to the Great Giver before the evening came!

The minutes sped on, and finally Lulah was aroused again—this time by the entrance of the dark chieftain himself. She started to her feet, and supported herself against the wall. He brought a lamp with him which he set down near the tray, and then he turned and addressed the trembling captive.

"My fairest wife, it is now evening, and we will repair to our nuptial couch. Come—I will lead the way."

Lulah grew faint and dizzy, and tottered to the nearest seat.

"Mercy!" she gasped.

"By the holy Prophet!" cried Miramolin, advancing, and seizing her by the arm, "if you trifle now, a worse fate than you ever dreamed of shall be yours!"

He would have gone on and spoken further, but at that moment there came the sound of disturbance from without, and he started back as though in alarm. While he was listening, the door of the apartment was thrown unceremoniously open, and Siloah rushed in.

"My lord," she cried, in breathless haste, "a body of strangers have made their way into the place!"

"Not beyond the secret door?" said the chieftain.

"Yes—into our inner chambers. They came as men who had been thoroughly instructed. Hark!—there is the clash of arms!"

Miramolin heard it plainly, and without further question, he rushed out from the apartment. In the long passage he found some dozen of his men, opposed by a force of strangers, fighting as best they could in such a place. With a loud shout he leaped forward, pushing his way among his followers, and reached the centre of conflict just in time to see Abdalla fall dead upon the blood-stained pavement. A cry of astonishment, followed by a bitter oath, broke from his lips as his gaze rested upon him who led the invaders.

"*Leon de Bournay!*"

"Aye, thou unholy villain!" shouted the knight of Normandy, as he drew back his sword, dripping with Abdalla's blood, to its guard, "it is I! Thou hast the lady Lulah here!"

"Yes,—and she is my wife!"

"Liar! thou shalt never utter that sentence again!" As de Bournay thus spoke he pressed hotly upon the robber chieftain, and in a very few moments he had him at a disadvantage.

In truth, Miramolin could at no time have been a

match at arms for the young and powerful Norman; but in the present instance he labored under a double disadvantage. The very fact of the Christians having gained entrance to the secret passage startled him, and, in a measure, upset his presence of mind; so, when he crossed swords with the knight, he was not so calm and watchful as he might otherwise have been.

"Betrayed!" gasped the chieftain, as he was driven against the wall.

"Aye,—by your own wickedness!" returned Leon, holding his point at the robber's breast. He held it there while he spoke, and then he bore upon the hilt with his whole weight.

Miramolin sank down upon the cold stones, with his hands pressed hard upon his bosom, as though he would stop the flow of blood; but the crimson tide would run —the gates of the heart had been rent asunder—and the life was going. He spoke not after he fell, nor did he look up; but, as his hands grew weak, and slipped from his breast, he bowed his head, and in a moment more sank wholly down. The robber chieftain—he who had done so much of evil—he who had so long been a terror to the Moors of Cordova—had breathed his last!

The battle could not rage much longer. Leon de Bournay was followed by a score of stout Christian knights, while not more than a dozen of the robbers had been present in the subterranean abode, the chief having sent most of his immediate attendants into the mountains to see that their companions were prepared for the morrow's work. Six of the outlaws were slain after their leader fell; and the remaining ones cried for quarter.

Lulah had heard the sound of the strife, and hope beamed once more upon her. She knew not who could have come; but she believed that any one who sought vengeance or retribution upon the robber, would befriend her. By and by the clash of arms ceased, and then she listened with painful eagerness. Hark! Some one is approaching!—Her door is opened—a man enters.

"*Lulah!*"

It is Leon de Bournay! With a wild cry of awakening joy she starts forward, and is clasped to the Christian's bosom.

"Dearest Lulah, have I saved thee?" There was agony in the question—the agony of a fearful doubt.

"Am I not safe with thee, dear Leon?" the maiden replied, clinging to him, and gazing hopefully up into his face.

"Miramolin said thou wert his wife!"

"He lied! He lied! There was a wicked mummery here; and he had just come to base his claims upon it, when the sound of disturbance below surprised him. Before Heaven's great Judge, I am not his wife!"

"Safe! safe!' broke from Leon's lips, as he pressed the maiden once more to his bosom. "Miramolin is dead—he fell by my hand—all the living robbers here are in bonds; and we will hasten away with all speed. O, Lulah, what a narrow escape has this been!"

With a rending sob, and a burst of tears, the maiden laid her head upon her lover's shoulder. When she thought of the fearful danger which had hung over her—when she thought how narrow her escape had been—how very near to the edge of the dark gulf she had

stood—she could hardly realize that she was wholly safe.

"Look up, look up, dearest," cried the knight, startled by her sudden weeping. "Thou art not harmed?"

"No, no, Leon. But—oh!—how terrible! How I have suffered!—what fears—what torture—what mortal anguish!"

He understood it all; and, in gentle, soothing, hopeful tones, he bore her upon his stout breast, and calmed her troubled spirit. He made her understand that the danger was past; and finally he succeeded in turning her thoughts into a brighter channel.

And then Lulah wanted to know how her lover had found her.

"How did you know I was here?" she asked. Leon made no reply.

"Of course you did know it?" she pursued, earnestly.

"Yes," the knight answered. "I knew where you were; and as soon as I gained the information I collected a score of my brethren, and made all haste to rescue you. Thank God, I was in season! But, dear Lulah," he continued, raising her hand to his lips, "you must ask me no more now. I am bound in honor to speak not another word. It will not be long, sweet love, ere strange things shall be shown to you. And now let us away as quickly as possible, for there is much before us—much, Lulah—and Heaven send that it worketh well for us!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A BLOW IS STRUCK!—WHERE?

An hour before daylight four men were assembled in one of Abu Zamar's private apartments. They were the grand vizier, Hixem, Alhakem, and Ismail. They had been together since midnight, though a part of the time had been spent at the secret rendezvous with others of the conspirators. They looked eager and anxious as they sat around the table, and their conversation was carried on in low, whispered tones.

"I think," said Abu, as he rolled up a parchment which had been open before him, "that all is arranged. I can remember nothing more. I would give much to know where the Norman knight is; but still, it matters not beyond the gratifying of my curiosity."

"He has evidently fled from the country," remarked Hixem.

"So I think," returned the vizier. "And thus we'll pass him by. And now," he added, unrolling the parchment once more, "let us bear in mind the parts we have to sustain. In a very few hours the grand council will be in session; and at the hour of noon, precisely, when the Muezzin at the mosque sounds the ezam, the

blow shall be struck. There can be no mistake. You, Hixem, are to be at the great mosque, which will be the central point within the city. You will have at least a thousand soldiers with you there. Of course they will be ready ?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the general. "I have arranged it all. Those of the soldiers who are with us, will be the only ones armed. Be assured all shall go well at the mosque."

"And you, Alhakem," continued the vizier, "will be at the western gate. Miramolin will join you there, with his host."

"I understand," answered the lieutenant, with a nod of assurance. "You need not fear that I shall fail."

"And you," pursued Abu, turning to Ismail, "will collect your men at the eastern gate."

"All is ready to that end," replied the prince. "By Allah ! I shall strike with vengeance when the time comes !"

"And I," Abu added, with a flashing eye, "shall be in the great council chamber, with the assembled power of the State. I have men enough to carry my point in that place. Of the members of the council forty-two of the one hundred and fifty are with us ; and then I have made sure that every guard who is on duty within the royal palace shall be ours. So, you see all is safe there. When the ezam is called, the head of the king shall drop. His crown then rests upon my brow ; and, as monarch of Cordova, I shall carry on the battle until the city is ours. When this is accomplished—when all within our walls are subdued—the subjugation of other districts will be easy."

And so thought the others.

"There is one point more," suggested Hixem. "The convicts must be loosed from the prison."

"That is all attended to," replied Abu. "Euric will see to that. He will see that the prisoners are set free, and Muza will organize them, and lead them to the mosque. And now we must separate, and look to our work. Remember—*at the hour of high twelve!*"

The conspirators arose, and joined hands: and having repeated their oath of fidelity, they went out, each to his own quarter.

* * * * * * *

The morning dawned bright and clear, and at an early hour the noble sheiks who were members of the Grand Council began to arrive at the royal palace. It was near the middle of the forenoon when the king, leaning upon the arm of Abu Zamar, entered the council chamber, and took his seat upon the throne. He looked pale and haggard, as though he had suffered much of late; but, when he beheld his noble governors and generals about him, something of the old fire lighted up his eye, and the royal look came back to his face.

At an hour before noon the council was organized, and the Grand Mufti made proclamation; after which the vizier presented those items of business and information which came first in order.

"Let the matter of this conspiracy come up soon," whispered the king; "for I am most anxious concerning that. Hast thou gained all the knowledge thou did'st hope for?"

"Yes, sire," replied Abu Zamar. His voice trembled

slightly; but he lost not the stern calmness of his features. "I have found it all. Wait until the Muezzin sounds the call to prayer—wait until that time, and then the subject of the conspiracy shall be given to the council."

The king seemed willing to let the matter rest thus; though it was plain to be seen that he was far from being easy. As the minutes sped on he grew more and more nervous; and, at times, he failed to understand clearly the propositions which his officers made.

Ah! he missed one familiar face from that council. He missed one in whose judgment he had always with safety confided—one who had always been free to advise, safe to plan, and bold to execute.

"Alas!" the monarch murmured to himself, as he bowed his head upon his hand, "where is Baal Tamar? I shall never see his like again!" He followed Abu Zamar with his eye, and he felt that he was not the man for the place. Somehow the young sheik had changed. His love seemed to have died out, and a spirit of restlessness and disquiet pervaded him. His movements, and his speech, were unnatural and constrained. But Abderahman's reflections were disturbed in a summary manner. An old sheik, governor of Alcala, arose in his place, and spoke with deep emotion:

"Sire, as there is a silence in our council, I have a desire to ask a question upon a most important point. Word hath reached us in the South that there is a deep-laid conspiracy in the kingdom—that it hath its heart in Cordova. I am anxious concerning it. Can the council have information?"

There was a strange movement in the chamber as the

old sheik sat down. Some looked eager, and anxious for information; while others grasped their daggers, as though the time might soon come when they would be needed. But Abu Zamar was the first to answer. He had been on his way to the window, where the sun-dial was placed, when the question was asked, and he stopped suddenly, and made reply:

"Sire," he said, "our lord of Alcala is a little premature in his motion. The whole subject of the conspiracy is under strict examination; and, within an hour, I shall have positive information to communicate."

There was a low murmur in the chamber, and the councillors gazed from one to another with anxious, inquisitive glances. The king said nothing, but looked about upon the assembly as though he were wondering if they were all his friends.

In the meantime Abu Zamar moved on to the window, and looked upon the dial. It wanted not more than ten minutes of noon. He walked back to the throne, and then went to the window again. Five minutes had gone! He gazed off upon the dome of the great mosque; and he saw the signal flying there—the signal which was to call Miramolin and his host from their ambush.

Hark! What sound is that? It is the clash of arms! It comes from the mosque, and from the distant gates! Abu bends his ear, and he hears it plainly. Others must hear it soon, for the din is increasing. Very soon it must reach the ears of the councillors, and of the king.

"By all the fiends!" gnashed Abu, between his clenched teeth, and with his dagger firmly clutched,

"they have struck too soon! But there is no help. We must follow!"

He had turned towards the throne, and was upon the point of speaking, when a loud noise, as of the tramping of many feet, was heard upon the broad stairs without. The king had started to his feet; but, before he could speak, the great door was thrown open, and a Moorish knight, clad in shining mail, with a black vizor drawn completely over his face, strode into the chamber. He was of majestic bearing, and most noble presence, and his step was of one who had authority. He advanced straight to the throne, and addressed the king.

"Sire," he said, in a tone that startled all who heard it, "as you value your life—as you value the welfare of your people—sit still upon your throne until your council is winnowed!" Then he turned to the assembly, and, in a loud voice, continued—

"My lords and nobles, there are conspirators among you! Let those who are honest be without fear!"

Then the mystic knight clapped his hands, and in a moment more two hundred armed men—members of the royal guard, came marching into the chamber. They seemed to know just what was wanted of them; for, without hesitation, they moved to the crescent-shaped auditory, and began to make prisoners of some of the councillors.

"How now!" cried Abu Zamar, as soon as he could recover from his astonishment sufficiently to command his speech. "In the name of all the powers, what meaneth this? Sire, it is a most—"

He was cut short in his fiery speech by feeling a

heavy hand laid upon his shoulder, and, on turning, he beheld the mysterious knight standing over him.

"Abu Zamar," the unknown said, in a voice that sounded strangely, startlingly familiar, "thou, too, art a prisoner!"

"Me!" shouted the vizier, drawing his sword and starting back. "By the fiends of darkness, thou liest! Make *me* a prisoner! By the everlasting heavens, the words shall die in thy heart, thou false-tongued fool!"

But Abu Zamar was not permitted to do as he pleased. Half-a-dozen stout soldiers gathered about him, and, while the curses sounded loud and deep upon his lips, his sword was taken from him, and his hands lashed behind him. And in like manner had forty-two members of the council been disarmed and bound. They had made but little resistance, for so quick and precise had been the movements of the soldiers, that they were under arrest ere they could fairly recover their senses from the first shock. Those lords and gentlemen who had not been molested, to the number of over a hundred and fifty, had been at first sorely alarmed, for they surely thought that this must be the breaking out of the rebellion; but when they saw the three-and-forty who were bound, and saw also that the work stopped there, they began to breathe again, though with great wonderment.

While this strange proceeding had been going on, the king had not spoken a word, but he sat upon his throne, with his body bent forward, watching the mystic knight, like one whose life-current had been suddenly suspended. But when he saw Abu Zamar bound, and saw that the

soldiers had stopped in their work, his power of speech returned to him.

"In the name of Allah and his Prophet!" he gasped, "what means this? Who art thou?"

"I am one who hath helped to crush a conspiracy that aimed at thy life, sire, and the total overthrow of thy government. Hark! do you not hear the sound of many voices in the streets?"

"Yes," whispered Abderahman, trembling.

"It is the sound of victory, sire. Thine enemies within the city are by this time all conquered. Heaven grant that it may be so without the walls."

"But—Abu Zamar—he is not—"

"Believe nothing, sire!" cried Abu, vehemently. "As you live, this is the rebellion! Can you not see it? Let yonder masked villain be slain where he stands!"

While the king was hesitating in his reply, gazing first upon this young vizier, and then upon the mystic knight, the great door was opened again, and Leon de Bournay, clad in armor from top to toe, and covered with blood and dust, entered the chamber, and advanced towards the throne. But he did not seek the king. No—he bowed to the Moorish knight, and then he said—

"My lord, I met the enemy this side of the Almo, nearly a thousand strong, under command of a lieutenant, and nearly all of them we either slew, or made prisoners."

"What enemy?" demanded the king, who seemed wholly beside himself with wonder and alarm.

"The Norman speaks of the mountain robbers, sire,"

returned the Unknown. "I sent him, this morning, with a host of his companions, to intercept the robbers, as I knew that they would be on their way to join the rebels in the capital. And he reports that he hath done his work."

"Did he meet Miramolin?"

"I slew Miramolin last night, sire, and made prisoners of some of his chief officers, so I had an easier task to-day," replied the Norman knight, as the Moor had motioned for him to speak. "The outlaws were without an acknowledged leader, and they held no hand against the stout arms of Christian knights. Still, though their chieftain was dead, they were pressing on to keep the appointment to which they had been pledged—to join the rebels in the capital—for they had been promised much plunder."

"Now, by the throne of my fathers!" cried the monarch, starting to his feet and clapping his hands, "I must understand this more fully. I will have no more of doubt or mystery!" He spoke like a king now, and the kingly look was upon his handsome face. "First, thou masked knight, I demand to know who and what thou art!"

The Unknown took a step forward and raised his vizor. A murmur of astonishment went up from the assembly; Abu Zamar uttered a groan, and tottered back, while the king, with a glad cry, sprang from his throne, and fell upon the bosom of his well-beloved, faithful minister.

"Baal Tamar!" he cried; "O—is it thou?"

"Yes, sire, it is your old friend, safe and well."

For some moments Abderahman found it difficult to

believe that all he saw and heard was real ; but it came to him after awhile, and once more he fell upon the bosom of his true grand vizier.

"Thou art safe now, sire," Baal said, as he led the king back to his throne.

"But there was a fearful conspiracy?"

"Yes, sire."

"And the blow was to have come—"

"It had been planned that thou shouldst fall at noon, sire, and the plot was most cunningly and carefully devised. Nay—start not, for the hour is passed, and thou art safe."

"And thou hast saved me, Baal?"

"No, sire—not I."

"Who then?"

"Thou shalt see the kind guardian, sire, and from his lips shalt thou hear the whole story of this abominable plot."

As Baal Tamar thus spoke, he turned towards the door, and shortly after he led the mystic youth forward —the same who had led him away from his palace, on a dark night, to a darker place.

"Euric!" broke from Abu Zamar's lips, as he saw the fair-faced boy. "*Betrayed!*" he added, in gasping tones, as he sank down upon a seat.

"This is he who hath saved you, sire," spoke Baal Tamar.

But the king heard nothing. He only saw the strange face before him, and, with his eyes fixed to a painful gaze, his hands clasped, and his whole frame quivering, he eagerly whispered—

"Great Allah! Who is this?"

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

The emotions manifested by the different individuals in the council chamber, when Euric entered, were as various as they were strange and startling. The conspirators knew at once that they had been betrayed; and, moreover, it was now evident who had done it. They glared upon their boyish companion with savage, vengeful glances, and their curses were loud and deep. Many of the councillors who were not in the conspiracy had heard much of the mysterious youth, and they gazed upon him with a wondering curiosity. But the king was the most startlingly affected. He had started up from his seat, and would have leaped down from the platform, had not Baal Tamar interposed.

"Sire," the old minister said, "I pray you listen to this youth. Listen, and he will tell you the whole story of this conspiracy."

"Great Allah!" murmured the monarch, as he sank back, and gazed from his old vizier to Euric, "what is all this! My best friend is dead, and is alive! Rebellion has come, and is gone! And now this spirit appeareth before me! I cannot comprehend it!"

Euric had taken a step forward, and was upon the

point of speaking, when Abu Zamar, bound as he was, started to his feet.

"Sire," he cried, "will you listen to the foul falsehood of an avowed conspirator? This is all a plot—a deep-laid, cunning plot—to cover up real guilt!"

"I will listen to anything," replied Abderahman, sternly. And he looked upon his quondam favorite as though he much distrusted him. "Sit down, Abu, and remain quiet. Down, I say, or I must force thee!"

As the young sheik sank back into his seat, the king turned to the strange youth, and bade him go on.

But they were destined to another interruption; for at that moment the great door opened again, and Beder Basim, the jailor, entered the chamber, and advanced straightway to where Baal Tamar stood.

"My lord," he said, "I have come to report as thou didst command. All is secure in the prison, and the last show of resistance or turmoil is put down."

"Right, good Beder," returned the minister. "And thou hast come in good time, too; for thou canst now corroborate the statements which Euric is about to make. Move back and listen." Then Baal Tamar turned to the king, and added:

"This is the last report we need, sire. The rebellion is crushed, and all is safe. And now Euric shall speak."

Once more the youth moved forward, and this time he was not interrupted. He trembled, and for a few moments his voice was choked; but finally he succeeded in controlling himself, and, with his hands folded upon his bosom, he commenced the revelation he had to make:

"Sire, I cannot speak long, for I am not strong; and,

in this presence, I feel oppressed; but yet you shall hear all of importance. Know, then, that I was a prisoner—confined in one of the gloomy cells of your stout prison—and that Beder Basim was my keeper. One day Beder came to me and told me that a poor man was dying in a deep dungeon, and he asked me if I would go and comfort him in his pain, and see if anything could be done for his relief. I went, and found the man past all hope of recovery. His name was Joudar, and he had committed a murder. I was kind to the suffering wretch, and spoke such words of comfort as I could call to mind. He was touched by my appeals, and finally stated that he had a secret to communicate. He would tell it to me, and he hoped that the act might in some measure make amends for the evil he had done. He then confessed to me that there was a dangerous conspiracy on foot in Cordova, and that he had been engaged in it—a conspiracy which aimed at the death of the king, and the overturning of the government. He said that many high officers were engaged in it, and that the services of the mountain robbers had been secured. And he told me further, that Abu Zamar was at the head of the whole—that Abu Zamar was the chief conspirator, and was to win the crown of Cordova if the rebellion succeeded."

At this point Abu leaped again to his feet. He was pale as death, but his lips frothed with rage.

"Sire," he cried, "this is false!—all, all false!"

"Down!" ordered the monarch, trembling at every joint. "Interrupt us again, and I'll have thy mouth stopped with a gag! Now go on, thou strange-faced boy. I am anxious."

"The dying man told me, sire, that Abu Zamar was the leader of the conspiracy, and that the blow was soon to be struck. He furthermore informed me that should the evil be suspected, the Christian sojourners in Cordova were to have the suspicion fastened upon them. In a little while the poor man died, and I went and told Beder Basim all I had heard; and I told him, too, that if he would give me permission, I would go forth and save the king, and save Cordova. At first he was fearful; but finally, when I had convinced him that I could disguise myself so that I should not be detected, he entered fully into my plan, feeling that the object we had in view would more than justify this departure from the strict line of his duty.

"So I disguised myself, sire, and went forth. I found Abu Zamar, and to him I represented that I had much cause for enmity against the king, and that I was ready to enter into any conspiracy that might be afloat. Of course he was wary, but I succeeded in allaying his doubts concerning my honesty, and he finally admitted me to his confidence, believing me to be the child of some banished noble. I was admitted after this, to the secret council of the conspirators, where I found Hixem, and Alhakem, and Ismail and Muza, and many others, some of whom you now see before you, bound. And there, too, I saw Miramolin, with some of his most noted lieutenants. And there I heard the whole plot made plain. I heard Abu Zamar plan for the death of Sir Leon de Bournay, for the Norman knight was feared. It had been given out that the Christians were in rebellion, and Abu Zamar would not have you question the fair knight. And Abu was jealous, too, for he knew that

"I will pledge my own life for the fidelity of the twelve whom I shall name."

"Then," pursued the vizier, "let it be as we have proposed. I will be here at one hour before midnight, and we will arrange the work. You can have your men ready by that time?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Be sure that the greatest care is taken; for this is a most important matter."

"My life is at stake."

"So is mine," added Abu Zamar; and with this he left the prison, and made his way to the royal palace, where he found the king anxious to see him.

"I have made some further progress, sire," he said, in answer to the monarch's inquiry, "and I find the proofs of the Christian's complicity in this matter increasing at every step. But, on the morrow, if my plans do not fail me, I shall know all. I have a trap set, and you shall see how the knight of Normandy will be led into it. In short, sire, I will have him where he cannot deny his guilt."

Abderahman was much pleased at this, and thought not of questioning what his favorite had done; but was rather inclined to give him unlimited power.

After this, Abu Zamar retired to his private apartment, where he busied himself until it lacked a little more than an hour of midnight, when he repaired again to the prison, where he found Alhakem waiting for him.

"All is in readiness," said the lieutenant. "The old jailer has retired, so the coast is clear. My men are in waiting, and are prepared for the work."

"How many have you selected?"

"Ten—all stout, faithful men, each of whom may be depended upon. I thought it best to take enough, so that the job might be done quickly and surely."

"Right, Alhakem. I have the writing all prepared. Here it is; and I think that the knight's own esquire would swear that his master wrote it." As he spoke he drew from his bosom a small piece of parchment, whereon he had written what purported to be a confession of Leon de Bournay, acknowledging his guilt, stating that he and his esquire chose rather to take their own lives than risk a trial, and advising his brother Christians to give up all thoughts against the Moorish king. "This," continued Abu Zamar, after he had read it, "we will have left upon de Bournay's table. What think you of it?"

Alhakem examined it and pronounced it just the thing. "What else do we wait for?" he asked,

"Only for your men."

"They are at hand."

"And do they know the cell?"

"I shall show them."

"They are to make no hesitation?"

"None at all. The dogs will be dead and cold before midnight."

"Then go at once, and I will await your return."

"You shall not wait long," replied the lieutenant; and having thus spoken, he went out and called the ten assassins whom he had instructed, and led them up to the cell where the Christians were confined.

CHAPTER XVI.

MUTTERINGS.

Abu Zamar remained in the private room of the officer of the guard, awaiting the return of his companion in iniquity. Part of the time he walked up and down the floor, and part of the time he sat upon one of the sofas. He was a little uneasy, for he had much upon his mind; but he believed that everything was working well, and he endeavored to cheer himself by the reflection. Still an occasional doubt would creep in upon him, and give him some trouble. At length Alhakem returned, and the vizier started forward to meet him.

"Now, my good lieutenant, is the work done?"

"No, my lord—it is not done!"

"How!" cried Abu, starting back. "Not done! In mercy's name, did you not have men enough? Did you hesitate? Has some foul fiend thwarted us?"

"Hold, my lord," interposed the lieutenant, as he placed his lantern upon a shelf. "You misjudge us if you think we could have failed under any ordinary circumstances. Had we found the Christians, they should not have been alive now."

"Had you found them? What mean you?"

"I mean that they were gone. They are not in the prison!"

"But they may have been changed to some other cell."

"No—that cannot be. Such things are never done without the knowledge of the officer of the guard. They have made their escape."

"By Allah, but this is most unfortunate. I cannot comprehend it. Can Beder Basim have dared to do such a thing?"

"Most assuredly not," answered the lieutenant, quickly and decidedly. "But how is it with that mysterious companion of ours, whom we call Euric? May not he have done it?"

Abu Zamar was about to reply, when, agreeably to the old saying, "Speak of his Satanic majesty," &c., the mystic youth made his appearance. He opened the door, and entered, without ceremony of any kind, bowing with polite dignity as he came in, and seeming entirely unconscious of the fact that there was anything remarkable in his movements.

"Ha! how is this?" cried the vizier, staring with astonishment. "How came you here?"

"I came, my lord, as you came, by the corridor and by the door."

"But," said Alhakem, with much show of agitation, "how passed you the guard? By the Prophet, I gave them strict orders to pass no one!"

"Blame not your guard, sir lieutenant," returned the youth, "for they have not willingly disobeyed you. Guards are nothing to me. They saw me not when I came."

"In mercy's name, what are you?" exclaimed the vizier, gazing upon the intruder with increased wonder. "Whence come you? How come you?"

"Abu Zamar, I am a conspirator, and I will follow the work until it is accomplished. Let us dispose of the legitimate business we have in hand ere we enter upon any other. As sure as the sun shall rise again, and roll another day over the earth, so sure shall you know the mystery when our work is done; but I will not speak more now, for an oath, as solemn as the chapters of The Book, binds my tongue. I have come to you at this hour on business. I have succeeded in accomplishing a purpose which I had in hand. I have led the Norman knight and his esquire out from the prison, and they are now both beyond these walls."

"Heaven save us! I feared it!" gasped Abu, clasping his hands upon his knees.

"Feared it?" repeated the youth, with a show of surprise. Was it not so planned? Were we not to have the Christians beyond the reach of the king?"

"Aye—and we would have done it to-night, most effectually," returned the vizier, excitedly. "By the spirits of darkness, this is most unfortunate!"

"Had I known your plan, my lord, I might have done differently. I know that the king was liable to call the prisoners before him, and I did not think it well that it should be so. The work of setting them free was once given me to do, and I thought not of possible harm in its accomplishment."

"My lord," spoke Alhakem, "would it not be well to let all other considerations rest for the while, and look

after these fellows? I can set my men upon their track at once."

"Aye—thou art right," replied the vizier. And then, turning to Euric, he asked, "How long since you set them free?"

"It is not yet an hour, my lord."

"Which way did they go?"

"I think they went first to their old residence, and from thence they probably took to the river."

Whatever may have been Abu Zamar's desire to bestow further rebuke upon the strange youth, or to dive further into the mystery which enveloped him, he deemed it best to defer all that, and follow the escaped Christians, so he bade Alhakem summon some of his trusty men, and as soon as possible he set off, allowing Euric to go whither he pleased.

The vizier and the lieutenant went to the dwelling which Leon de Bournay had formerly occupied, and, upon close examination, they were satisfied that some one had recently been in the house, as there were fresh tracks in the court, and new marks in the dust upon the stairs; but there was no living Christian to be found in it now, and they went out into the garden. Here, also, they found fresh footprints, which they traced to the water's edge.

"We must find two boats," said Abu, "and one party must go up, while another goes down. We may gain some trace of him upon the river."

And so it was done, and they cruised about upon the water, pulling up and pulling down, pulling in-shore and pulling out, until it lacked only an hour of day, but

no trace could they find further of the knight of Normandy.

"Where is Euric?" asked Abu Zamar, when they had reached the prison again.

But Alhakem did not know. No one knew. They had not thought to bid him meet them again, and they had no hopes of finding him now.

"By the holy Prophet!" cried the lieutenant, "I do much doubt that youth. I fear him."

"Why so?" asked the vizier, in a troubled mood.

"Because I believe he is an evil genius. He is not human. He hath put on this remarkable guise—a guise which startles us all with its seeming familiarity, but which none of us can read—he hath put it on, and come amongst us for evil."

"Nay, Alhakem," replied Abu, after a little reflection, "I do not think so. I have more confidence in him. I know there is something strange about him—something inexplicable—but still I will trust him. Thus far he hath served us well, and even in this thing he hath done no more than he was commissioned to do."

"Well," said the lieutenant, with a slight tinge of reluctance, "I hope you may be right. At all events, we can easily watch him, if he is human."

"Pshaw! don't talk so, Alhakem. I tell you, in time you shall find that he is all that he should be. I know how the matter stands, and I fancy I can almost read his secret. I believe he is the son of some one who has been banished from Cordova, and he has sworn, with an oath, to be revenged. From a remark which I once heard him drop, I believe that those whom he repre-

sents—probably some members of his family, and perhaps his parents—have bound him by an oath to keep his secret until his purpose of revenge is accomplished."

The lieutenant had much confidence in Abu Zamar's judgment, and he tried to make himself believe that this all might be so."

"And now," said the vizier, "I must to my palace awhile, and then to the king. And yet," he added, pressing his hand upon his brow, "I know not exactly how to move. The king must know that de Bournay has escaped, and then his first movement will be to send for Beder Basim. By Allah, I must see the jailor first, for I would know how he will look upon the matter. I will go now to my palace, and in an hour do you send for me, as though something of consequence had happened."

The lieutenant promised so to do, and Abu Zamar withdrew, and made the best of his way to his palace, being admitted by one who was in his confidence, where he threw himself upon a couch and fell asleep.

Shortly after sunrise the vizier was aroused by one of his attendants, who announced that a messenger, from an officer of the guard at the prison, wished to speak with him. Abu performed his toilet as soon as possible, and then went down into the smaller court, where he found the messenger waiting. Of course, it was a summons from Alhakem, and the vizier at once set out. At the prison he received information that Leon de Bournay and his esquire had both escaped some time during the night. Upon this he straightway sent for Beder Basim, whom he met with a stern, indignant look.

"Beder," he cried, "what is this I hear? I have been called from my palace by the officer of the guard, and here I am met with the startling intelligence that both the Christian prisoners have made their escape! What can it mean?"

"Escaped?" uttered the old man, starting, as though with terror.

"Aye," said Alhakam. "When I sent the sentinel around this morning, he found Leon de Bournay's cell open and empty. We have searched all the corridors and the courts, but the prisoners cannot be found."

"What make you of it?" added Abu Zamar.

"In truth, I know not what to make of it," replied Beder, trembling. "But the guard are responsible," he said, with sudden energy.

"Are not all the prisoners under your charge?"

"Not wholly so, my lord. Permanent prisoners, who are given in charge to me as such, upon sentence of the king, I am responsible for with my life; but those who are brought hither by the royal guard, and to whom the officer of said guard may at any time have access, are not wholly upon my responsibility. If the Christians are gone, must they not have passed some of the sentinels?"

"None of the sentinels have seen them," said Alhakem.

"Then," responded the old man, with his hands folded upon his breast, "an evil spirit is broke loose in Cordova. My lord, I much fear that some ill-disposed afrite haunts our prison; for it cannot be that there is treason among the royal guard."

"Of course there cannot be," said the lieutenant, quickly.

"At all events," added Beder Basim, "you had better send in search of the missing prisoners, and I will look out for those that are left. I hope the king will not blame me."

"Fear not on that score, good Beder," interposed the vizier. "I know your stern integrity, and I will excuse you to our royal master. You had better go and see if the rest of your prisoners are safe, while we post off men after the fugitives."

Without further remark the old jailer turned and left the place, and when he was gone the two conspirators conferred somewhat further together.

"I do not think Beder Basim suspects anything," said the lieutenant.

"No," replied Abu. "He is a blunt old man, and makes curious expressions; but I am sure he does not suspect us. However, let them suspect as much as they please, we shall be free from danger before their suspicions can take any due form. But I must now to the king, and fix this matter with him as best I can; and, in the meantime, be careful how you answer questions touching it."

When Abu Zamar met the king, he broke to him as carefully as possible the news of the escape of the two Christians.

"But, sire," he said, ere Abderahman had time to answer, "I am rather glad, than otherwise, that they are gone, for I have a clue to their whereabouts, and will thus find them in company with some of their accomplices."

"Still," urged the monarch, as soon as he could find room for speech, "I do not understand it. How, in the name of the Prophet, could they have escaped?"

"I can easily account for it," replied Abu, determined to make a bold stroke. "I have had a conference with Beder Basim and the lieutenant, and we have made up our minds that there must be one or more conspirators among the royal guard. However, this gives me no uneasiness, as we can easily detect the villain if he is there."

The king was fairly beside himself with astonishment and vexation; by watchful effort, however, Abu Zamar succeeded in quieting him.

"But," pursued Abderahman, after he had paced the floor awhile, "I am uneasy and anxious. I cannot live so. I would rather the conspirators should rise to-day, and give me battle at the very gates of my palace, than live in this suspense. Battle, hot and fierce, would be a relief to me."

"Sire," replied the vizier, with much emphasis and assurance, "give me but three days more, and I will lay this whole thing open. We may have to fight; but we will fight with much advantage."

"When you ask for just three days, do you know what you can do within that time?"

"Yes, sire. I speak understandingly. If you can restrain your impatience for that length of time, you shall find light enough beyond it."

And the king said he would wait.

But the king was not the only one in Cordova who was rendered uneasy by the mystic cloud that hung over the land. There was uneasiness on every side.

The disappearance of Baal Tamar, who had been beloved on all hands, had startled the people, so that in all quarters a dangerous conspiracy was talked of and feared.

"Alas!" said an old armorer, almost under the shadow of the royal palace, "things have gone wrong ever since the beautiful young queen was dragged away and locked up in the great prison."

"Aye," muttered another, with a shake of the head, "and things will grow worse with the new love the king has taken."

"What love?" asked the armorer.

"I mean—*Abu Zamar*."

"Ah—be careful how you whisper that. There's evil in the very name!"

CHAPTER XVII.

GLOOM WITHOUT—GLOOM WITHIN!

The morning opened with clouds and wind—clouds which arose from beyond the mountains, and wind which came howling and moaning down from their bleak summits. The day was dark and dismal, and the great river gave forth strange notes as it rolled on in its swelling flood. All was gloom in Cordova—gloom without and within—gloom upon men's faces, and gloom in men's hearts. And there was gloom in the deep dungeon where sat the imprisoned queen. Her

head was bowed; her small, white hands were clasped with a tight pressure upon her bosom; and she murmured to herself of the fate which had befallen her. There was agony in her tones, and marks of mighty emotion upon her fair brow.

And into the dungeon came Abu Zamar—from the gloom without to the gloom within. He came unannounced, and without ceremony. There had been something darker than gloom upon his face that morning; but it all vanished as he entered the dungeon, and when he met the queen's gaze he smiled.

"Pardon me, sweet Ariadne," he said, as he bowed before her, and then took a seat; "pardon me for this intrusion. I was here on business, and I could not resist the temptation to see you. I thought that, perhaps, the visit of a friend might cheer you somewhat. Surely the light of a loving heart must beam from my face; and Heaven grant that it may serve to warm and vivify your own soul. O, it must be very gloomy here!"

"It is gloomy everywhere for me!" murmured the queen, without looking up.

"No, no—say not so," cried Abu, impetuously, but yet with some show of tenderness. "You shall find joy in the future as sure as we both live. Of course it is gloomy here."

"O—most gloomy!"

"And you long to be free once more?"

"Heaven only knows how eagerly I pray for it!"

"Then, sweet Ariadne, let me give to thee the assurance that thy prayers shall not be in vain. I have already made safe plans for our mutual happiness. Mark me," the vizier continued, growing more earnest

in his tone and manner, and emitting more fire from his dark eyes; 'if our peace and blessedness of love could be secured in no other way, I would give up every honor I possess in Cordova, and depart for some new home. There are many places where our love could find safe repose. In Arabia—in Aleppo—in Damascus—in any place our fancy might select. Is it not so? Say—how feel you?"

Ariadne, who, all this time, had been gazing down upon the floor, now raised her head, and looked into Abu Zamar's face. There was meaning enough in her expression, though it might have been difficult to read it. Her large, dark, melting eyes beamed with a strange light—it surely looked like a hopeful one—and her lips quivered as though she could not say all she felt.

"My lord," she said, "I care little whither I go, so that freedom and peace be mine. I do wish to be free from this prison; I do wish to love, and be loved."

"And you will come and be mine?" cried Abu.

"I cannot—I must not, promise too much. First, let me be free. I would not purchase liberty at the sacrifice of conscience. I would not have you, in the time to come, turn upon me and say that you bought my love. As a prisoner I may not answer. When I am free, I can answer freely."

"And," urged the vizier, "when you are free you will not crush me by a cruel answer. Speak,—assure me of that. Speak, if it be only one word."

"Abu Zamar," spoke the queen, slowly, and with calm truthfulness, "he who sets me free from this place

will receive my lasting gratitude; and he who has my gratitude, may have my love. Need I say more?"

No—Abu did not ask any more. The beautiful Ariadne had said enough, and he was satisfied. The look upon his face was more of triumph than of joy, though there was much of love in his ardent gaze—of love such as the base passions can beget—not love such as the pure heart feels. He seized her hand and kissed it, and then moved towards the door. He stopped, however, and turned again to the queen.

"Sweet one," he said, "once I could have died for thee. That was before another snatched thee from me. But now I will live for thee—I will live for thee alone. I will earn thy gratitude, and thy love shall be mine of right. For the present—for a little while—I leave thee with the good angels which my prayers shall evoke; but very soon thy better star shall arise."

With this he went out; and when he was alone, he spoke with himself:

"I have her safe enough. The great indignity which she has suffered at the hands of the king rankles so in her heart, that she comes most readily into my hands. I have not forgotten the love which I once did bear her; and, if I love her not again as I did then, I will at least treat her well. At all events, I will win and wear her—wear her until—I find a fairer!"

* * * * * * *

The morning had opened in storm and gloom—the day had passed in storm and gloom—and the evening closed in storm and gloom.

Night, when it came, shut down upon Cordova with

storm and gloom and utter darkness. The citizens kept their houses; and even the sentinels remained in their boxes; for, had they ventured forth, they could have seen nothing; so they lay quiet in their sheltering nooks, and watched with their ears.

Storm and darkness! How fitting was the type! In that hour the darkest deed was to be sealed. A heart that had never known true goodness was to put on a darker crime than it had before borne! A record was to be made before which the records of Tartarus might shine as pages of light!

At midnight, when the gloom was deepest, and the darkness seemed most terrible—terrible from the very stillness of the dying storm—Abu Zamar glided from his palace, and groped his way along the sloppy street. He had no need to be watchful against observation now, though he went slowly enough, as he had to feel out his way step by step. At length he stopped and listened, as though he feared some one were following him. Was it the tread of feet he heard, or only the dripping of the big drops from the weeping roofs? He moved on again, and again he stopped. He could see nothing but the dark walls about him, and he could hear nothing save the dropping of the water.

"It is nothing," he said to himself. "I am over-fearful to-night." And once more he moved on. When he next stopped it was before the gate of a small porch, in an out-of-the-way place, where he gained admittance by virtue of signals such as were given at the chamber of the conspirators; and, in a little while longer, he was in a rough, dimly-lighted apartment, alone with the robber chieftain.

"Well, my lord, I have waited for you," said Miramolin. "Midnight was the hour."

"I know," replied Abu Zamar, shaking the water from his cloak. "I should have been here before, but I did not make allowance for the impeding darkness. I had to fairly creep along, and I consider myself fortunate that I reached the place at all. And, furthermore, I have stopped some on the way, as I fancied I heard footsteps behind me."

"What—were you followed?"

"No. It must have been the pattering of the water from the houses. However, I am here, and all is safe; and now let us to business, for time presses."

"Aye—it presses with me, most surely," returned Miramolin; "for I must be out of the city ere the guard is changed."

"Have you seen your men?" asked Abu, with a slight tremor of anxiety in his voice.

"I have," replied the chieftain. "I have seen every man; and they number over a thousand."

"And can I have them all?"

"Yes—upon the conditions I have named."

"I have already assured you that, in the districts north of our capital, your men should have the privilege of plunder."

"Aye, Abu Zamar, that you have granted; and now for the other part. How fares your labor with the queen?"

"By Allah, my chieftain," returned the vizier, with a triumphant flash of the eye, "she is mine!"

"Ah—was she easily won?"

"Yes," said Abu. "Though," he added, after a

moment's pause, "I think she was more moved by a spirit of revenge against the king, than by love for me."

"It would not be strange if such were the case," returned the robber, with a nod of the head. "However, it matters little to you, so you possess her."

"True," responded the vizier. "She will be mine, and that sufficeth."

"Then," pursued Miramolin, in a lower tone, "we come to the second proposition. I have seen the lady Lulah several times, and I long to possess her. If you will give her up to me, our contract will be sealed. What say you?"

Abu Zamar cast his eyes about him, as though he feared there might be some listening ear fastened to the solid wall, and finally he said—

"I have thought the matter over, and *the Lady Lulah shall be yours!*"

"Ha! art honest with me, Abu?"

"Yes, Miramolin—*she shall be yours!*"

The robber chieftain gazed upon the man before him as though he feared that one who could do such a deed could possess little honor or truth; but he did not speak any such doubts, though what he did speak may have been tinged with them.

"Upon my faith, Abu Zamar," he said, "I would not doubt you; but yet I would have some further assurance of this. It lacks now only two days of the time when our work is to be done; and, you remember, she was to be mine—wholly mine—before that hour should come. When you are king——"

"Stop," interposed the vizier, with a slight touch of

indignation in his manner. "What I promise, as grand vizier, or what I may have promised as governor of Cazalla, shall not be set aside by Abu Zamar, when he is king."

Again the robber chieftain looked at him with that significant look; and, if he had uttered the thoughts which ran through his mind when he gave that slight shake of the head, he would have said, "Ah, Abu, if you can so meanly and treacherously betray the harmless, defenceless girl who has been cast upon your care, what might you not do unto me if you had the power? I violate no confidence—I tell no lie—when I take the girl; for I have a fancy for her, and want her. But you—O what a transcendent villain!" But he hid all this, and said, instead:

"My good lord, I have told you once that I doubted you not; but even kings give bonds for the performance of their obligations. The case stands plain between us. You say she shall be mine. But how shall I know that the thing may not fail? The time between now and the gathering of the grand council is but short. You know it was to be done before that time."

Abu Zamar leaned his brow upon his hand; and then he started up and took several turns across the dungeon-like apartment. Finally he stopped and laid his hand upon the chieftain's arm.

"Miramolin," he said, in a low, whispered tone, "I can give you the pledge you ask."

"How?"

"First let me be sure that there can be no possible failure on the part of your men."

"I have told you that they are ready. My men go whither I say. And now for the pledge."

"Listen," returned the vizier, again giving that half-frightened, half-cautious look about the room, "the lady Lulah shall be delivered into your hands within four-and-twenty hours?"

"Ha!" cried the robber with a start, "mean ye so?"

"I do."

"But how shall it be done? Who shall bring her to me?"

"I will," replied Abu Zamar, trembling. He trembled, not from the workings of conscience; nor yet from the presence of any great fear, but the emotion was an involuntary one, seeming to spring from a spark of humanity which may not be wholly annihilated in the bosom of a child of God.

"But," said Miramolin, "I cannot with safety bear her from the city."

"There is no need," returned Abu. "I will bring her to you. I will take her without the city. Aye—I will deliver her to you at any point within reasonable distance."

"Now, by Allah! this soundeth like business," exclaimed the robber, slapping his companion upon the shoulder. "Let me see. Of course you would not bring her in the day-time?"

"No."

"Then, to-morrow evening I can meet you at the dwelling of my lieutenant, Abdalla. You know his place."

"Yes."

"It is on the river's bank, and can be easily reached."

"She shall be there for you in season. But, Miramolin, you must send some of your own men down. I would not trust this secret with any of my own servants, nor yet with any of our followers in the city."

"You shall have as many of my men as you like," said the robber: "and I will send them to you at any hour you may name."

The compact was sealed! All else was mere arrangement and form, which affected not the deed. When Abu Zamar emerged from the low gate one bright star was shining in the eastern heavens—looking forth with its celestial eye of light, from a point where the dark clouds were rolling asunder. He saw it, and he asked himself if the omen were a good one. He looked again, and the star was gone. What did this omen mean?

"I care not," he said to himself, as he walked on. "If it is shut out from me, it is also shut out from all others. Aye—and some shall soon be where stars and suns and moons shine eternally?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

KEEPING THE DARK BOND.

Poor Lulah! How much she had suffered! Her eyes were swollen with weeping, and her cheek had grown pale. At first she had not been willing to believe that her father was dead; but the story of Abu Zamar, so fairly told, and so solemnly asserted, and the faith of all about her to that effect, finally led her into the

agonizing conviction. She had never known before now how much she loved her father. She had never before realized how kind and good he was. She had never, until now, learned how to prize his noble, truthful character. And then the arrest and imprisonment of Leon de Bournay, and the dark face connected therewith, had given additional pangs to her bleeding heart. She had sought to see the king, for the purpose of pleading in the Christian's behalf; but she was not permitted to leave her father's palace. She held a suspicion that Abu Zamar was responsible for her close confinement; but she could not be sure. She knew that he had taken possession of her father's palace, and that he was master there.

And now, as she sat in her boudoir, in the early night, the deeper shades having but just fallen upon the city, she had learned that Leon de Bournay had escaped from his prison. Under other circumstances she might have found some comfort in this; but she found none now; for she had been made to believe that the Norman knight had either fled from the country, or else that he was with the robbers in the mountains. It was told to her that he might have entered into a league with the outlaws for purposes of revenge; but no power could make her believe that. If he was in the mountains, with the robbers, then was he a prisoner, and his life in danger. But this was not all. She had heard whisperings of a rebellion—of a conspiracy—which aimed at the overturning of the government; and she had heard that the Christians were engaged in it. It was said that the Norman knight was at the head of it; but she did not believe it. Yet she believed that dark days were com-

ing ; and she shuddered fearfully as she thought of what might befall Cordova in such an event,—aye—of what might befall herself !

She sat by the open casement, gazing out upon the countless stars that shone in the firmament. The storm of the previous night had passed away, and the genial sun of a warm, pleasant day had inspired sweet nature to send forth her richest fragrance.

"O, my father ! where art thou ?" she murmured, with her hands folded upon her bosom, and her eyes upraised towards the brilliant host. "Would that I could know if thy spirit wanders among yon starry throng ! Wilt thou never come back to care for me—never !" And in a few moments more she murmured again : "Leon !—sweet Leon ! where art thou ? O ! canst thou not come to thy love ! Canst thou not send her one word ! If thou livest, I will live in hope ; but, if thou art dead, then let me die also !"

She had spoken thus when the door of the room was opened, and some one entered. She did not turn her head quickly, for she supposed, of course, that it was one of her waiting women. When she did look around, however, a quick cry of alarm broke from her lips. It was Abu Zamar who stood before her ! But if she had been alarmed at first, the emotion was quickly overcome by a spirit of indignation.

"How now, sir !" she cried, starting to her feet ; her dark eyes flashing, and her form erect. "How dare you thus intrude ?"

"Peace, dear lady," said the vizier, in his softest tones. "Wait till you hear me, and I am sure you will not blame me."

"I will not listen to you here," returned the maiden, proudly. "This is a place in which you trespass. If you have anything to communicate, you can send for me, and I will receive you in a fitting manner."

"But, my lady, you know not what I have to say unto you."

"Nor do I care to know while you thus insult my honor and my station. Leave me, sir, or I shall call for my servants."

"No, no, Lulah. Wait!"

"Leave the room, my lord, or I give the alarm. As I live, I will not bow to this!"

"But, lady, you do not know why I have come, nor why I have come unannounced. You may do a very foolish thing if you do not have a care."

He spoke so calmly, and seemed so little to notice her perremptory commands, that, in spite of her indignation, she allowed him to proceed.

"Now listen," he added, after a short pause, "and you will see that I have not done such a wrong thing, after all. I come from the king, and he would see you."

"See me?—the king?" uttered Lulah, starting with surprise.

"Aye, lady," the vizier responded, with the same calm, steady look. "He hath sent me for you, and he would have you come at once. And, furthermore, he bade me bring you as secretly as possible, as he is anxious to excite no suspicions touching his movements."

"But wherefore is it?" asked the maiden.

"I think it is to question thee respecting some past movements of Leon de Bournay."

Lulah started as she heard this; but she speedily

overcame the outward emotion, for she would not show her feelings to the man before her.

"You have heard," he resumed, after he had watched the effect of his words upon her, "that this de Bournay has been once imprisoned, and that he did once escape. He has been arrested again, and will be brought to speedy trial. However, before final judgment is passed, the king wishes to confer with you, as he has heard something of your adventure with the Christian knight. I am free to confess that I objected to your being sent for, as I did not wish to have you mixed up in the affair; but his majesty would not listen. He said he must see you, and that, too, as quickly as possible. He was particular in his command that none should know of your attendance save you and myself. Hence you will understand why I came into your presence as I did."

All Lulah's indignation had vanished, and she was now intent upon this new subject. Could she refuse to go? No. She had prayed for this very opportunity. She would go, and assure the king that Leon de Bournay was a noble, honorable man. She would make the king understand that the Norman knight could not do a wicked act.

"I will call my attendants," she said, after a little reflection, "and accompany you."

"But you forget," said Abu, with a smile, and a shake of the head. "We are to go alone. Had it been proper to call your attendants, I should have done so ere I saw you—I should not have intruded myself so unceremoniously. Pardon me, lady, but the king waits for us. You will act your own pleasure. If you do not wish to go I will inform his majesty to that effect; and, if you

have any excuse to send, I will carry it most punctually. Perhaps I could excuse you to the king myself. I am willing to try."

"No," said the maiden, after deliberating awhile; "I will go with you." She spoke quickly and earnestly, and, lest Abu Zamar should read her real sentiments, she added: "I fear the king would not forgive me. I will not venture to awaken his anger."

"You are right, Lulah. I know how fractious the king is; and I think it would be well to humor him. I will wait for you here if you will prepare at once."

Surely there could be no danger. The thought was absurd, and she gave it no harbor in her bosom. She said she would be ready in a few moments, and then she went into her chamber. In a little while she returned, with her veil and mantle on, and accompanied the vizier down into the court.

"Do you go that way, my lord?" she asked, as her conductor turned towards the river gate.

"Yes, lady. We can go more quietly by water; and, moreover, I have one of the king's barges at hand."

She went with him out upon the landing, and allowed him to hand her down into the boat which lay there. She saw six stout oarsmen, while a seventh sat at the helm; but she noticed them not particularly, as she had to be watchful of her footing; but she supposed they were the king's boatmen. As soon as she had taken a seat beneath the light canopy which had been thrown over the stern, and Abu Zamar had sat down beside her, the barge was pushed off, and was soon darting swiftly through the water.

For some moments after she had reclined upon her

seat Lulah did not look up, but sat, with her head bowed, trying to arrange in her mind the words she would speak unto the king. But the task was a difficult one, and she was finally forced to give it up, with the simple resolve that she would speak the truth, and nothing more. After this she gazed out upon the water, then up at the starlit sky, and, anon, she looked upon the walls, and turrets, and minarets, as they glided gradually by in the dim distance.

But— How is this? Something is wrong!

"Abu Zamar," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, "what means this? We are going up the river!"

"Yes, lady."

"But the royal palace is down the river. What means it? Tell me."

"Dear lady, the king holds not audience to-night in the city. We shall find him at one of the palaces above here."

"There are no palaces above here, my lord."

"The royal presence may make a palace of any abode," replied Abu, in a quiet tone.

Lulah was startled, for this did not appear right. Still she had sense enough to reflect, and it required but a very few moments of consideration to asure her that it was all wrong. They were playing her false. She knew it. All the circumstances, being directed by this last development, now pointed that way.

"My lord," she said, tremblingly, but yet with strength of will, "let the boat turn back. I will not go any further in this direction."

"Be easy, Lulah. You have nothing to fear."

"Turn back, I say!" cried the maiden, vehemently.

"I will see the king at his palace, but I will not go to see him in this way. Will you obey me?"

"We cannot turn back now," returned Abu, in an easy, persuasive tone. "We have come too far. You are foolish if you think there is danger."

"But, Abu Zamar, I am determined. I *will not* go in this direction. Now will you turn back?"

"I have told you, lady—we cannot."

"Cannot!" repeated Lulah, as though she had been stricken by a heavy hand.

"We cannot!"

"In heaven's name, what mean you? Turn back! O, turn back! I shall call out to the boatmen!"

"Hush, lady. The boatmen obey no will but mine. You would appeal to them in vain."

"Then I will cry out for help from the shore."

"Ah, my fair Lulah, you would hardly be able to send your voice so far. If you will look, you will see that we have passed the city wall, and that the palaces and kiosks are all behind us."

The maiden did look, and she found that it was as the vizier had said. She could see, by the dim starlight, the shore upon either hand, and no dwellings were there—only trees, and crags, and open fields. And then she gazed upon the men who plied the oars, and she saw that they were dark and wild-looking, and that their garbs were not such as any of the king's servants ever wore. A terrible fear came upon her. It was not defined—it had no form—but it was terrible in its darkness and mystery. She started to her feet, and would have leaped from the pavilion, but Abu Zamar caught her by the arm, and pulled her back.

"Let me go!" she cried, trying to break from him.

"And whither would you go?" he asked, holding her firmly, and showing a little temper in his tone.

"Anywhere!" the maiden replied, still struggling to free herself. "If you will not turn back I shall leap into the river! Let me go! Unhand me! O, mercy! is there no one here to help me? Back! back, I say! Ye that ply the oars, turn back! In heaven's name, I beseech you!"

But those who plied the oars paid no attention to her cries, not even so much as to lend an ear.

"Lulah," spoke Abu, with his teeth set, and his fingers clasped painfully upon the tender flesh of her arm, "you may cry out till the day of judgment; and you may struggle with all your might; but you can neither call help to your side, nor escape from my control." He pulled her down upon the seat as he spoke; and then he added, in a threatening, ugly tone,—"Now sit still and keep quiet, and all may be well; but, if you offer any more resistance, I'll have you bound as though you were a common prisoner! I would not give you needless pain, nor be over-severe; but, by the Power that made me, I will accomplish my purpose!"

Pale and frightened, and with her heart almost bursting with its fearful pulsations, Lulah sank back upon the seat; and, when she was still, Abu Zamar released his hold upon her arm.

"You are not taking me to the king," she finally whispered, in a gasping tone.

"I am not!" was the reply.

"O! Where—where am I going?"

"Can you not guess?"

"No, no,—tell me !—O, tell me !"

"I am taking thee *from* the king, my lady. He would like to see thee, and I will that he shall not. Is it not plain enough now ?"

"Villain ! thou hast perjured thyself !"

"Never mind, sweet one, so that I accomplish my purpose. If there be blame to bear, I will bear it. And now rest you easy. You shall not be long confined away from home. Be wise, I pray thee, and do not force me to violence."

Poor Lulah ! She thought she understood it all now; and, as the swiftly gliding boat bore her further and further away from the city—bore her on by the signal hill, and past the cot of Alcassim—on, on, till the mountains cast their shadows upon the water—she fancied that she was being taken away by the jealous vizier so that she should speak no word in favor of the Christian knight.

It was far away from the capital that the boat stopped, at a rough landing, close by a steep hill, beyond which arose the mountains, dark and drear. The maiden was assisted to the shore ; and Abu Zamar led her up the bank into a mule path. Not far off, against the side of a second bank, or bluff, she saw a small cottage, and towards this she was led. It was a mean-looking structure, and seemed to depend for support upon the firm bank against which its rear wall was built. A slight rap from the vizier brought a clownish looking fellow to the door, who bore a lighted torch, and who at once admitted the applicants.

"Light us on to the inner apartment," said Abu, after the door behind them had been closed and re-fastened.

And then turning to Lulah he added: "We shall soon be at our journey's end."

How strangely his voice sounded, and how strangely his face looked! But it might be the echo of the old house—it might be only the effect of the flaming torch. Lulah held her beating heart, and followed on.

But—how is this? Two doors have been opened—two apartments passed—and now they have entered a long corridor, with walls of stone! Whence comes this wonderful space within the limits of so small a cot. In spite of her fears and her terror, the maiden had power of reason enough left to comprehend that this corridor, or passage, must have been digged in the hill-side; and that the open cottage was but a mask, serving, in reality only as a sort of porch to the hidden chambers within the bowels of the hill.

At the end of this passage a door was opened—they passed through a small ante-room—then another door—and Lulah found herself within a large, well-furnished apartment, where brilliant lamps were burning, and where rich perfumes filled the air. For a few moments her eyes were dazzled; but she soon regained her power of vision, and gazed anxiously about.

"Great Allah, what is this?" she gasped, seizing Abu Zamar by the arm.

Aye—in that moment she caught the arm of the man whom she knew to be a villain; for something more terrible was before her!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE THRESHOLD OF DESPAIR.

Abdallah was a lieutenant under Miramolin, and one of the most efficient of all his officers ; yet he generally wore the garb of a goatherd, and, sometimes, he tended the goats upon the green slopes that swept up from the river. His cot was built against the side of the hill, and seemed to the passer-by a poor affair ; and even to the traveler, who was admitted beneath the roof, it did not appear any better ; but those who owned it, and those who had a legitimate right to the knowledge, knew more than all this. They knew that there were large and costly chambers within Abdalla's dwelling, and that vast stores of wealth were gathered there. Much labor had been spent in forming these chambers in the depths of the hill, and they had for a long while served the robbers in various ways. Honest people who passed that way often saw Abdalla and his clownish looking servant busy in attending the goats, and they mistrusted nothing beyond this. The secret of the subterranean apartments had been well kept.

And it was into one of these apartments that Lulah had been led ; and what she saw there struck more terror to her soul than she had before experienced.

the lady Lulah had looked with favor upon the brave Christian. I heard the plan for de Bournay's death—it was after he had escaped from one trap—and I determined to save him if he was worthy. I visited him at his dwelling, and tried him, and I soon found that no power on earth could induce him to do the evil of which he had been accused. On the very night when you sent Omar to arrest the Norman, Abu Zamar had sent the robber chieftain to slay him, and you know, sire, how the timely arrival of your captain saved him.

"But another thing happened on that same night, or I might have been present to frustrate the murderous plan myself. The conspirators were fearful of me, and I demanded that they should prove me. Then Abu Zamar proposed that I should go and slay the grand vizier—that I should go and take the life of the father of the maiden that he had professed to love! I promised to remove the minister, and I did it the more readily, as I knew that his death had been determined upon. He was much in the way of the plotters. I went to Baal Tamar's palace, and when I had assured myself that he would comply with my wishes, I revealed to him the whole plot of the conspiracy, and told him who I was. He saw the whole force of my plan, and, without speaking a word to any member of his family, he went with me to the prison, where Beder Basim found him a secure retreat. After this I returned to the secret chamber, and announced that Baal Tamar was disposed of, and they believed that he was dead, and from that hour, they pushed on more boldly. Still there was one thing to trouble them: Leon de Bournay was in prison, and might, at any moment, be called

before the king. It was planned that I should go and set him free, and then he could be slain in the street. I went to him, and I offered him his freedom, but he would not take it. It would appear against him as an evidence of guilt. He was innocent of all crime, and he demanded to see the king. Had he left his cell he would not have fallen into the hands of his enemies, for Beder Basim was on guard. However, he would not go, and so I reported to the conspirators.

"In the meantime Abu Zamar had been raised to the office of grand vizier, and thus he had access to the prison, and a new scheme was devised for the destruction of the Norman knight. Beder Basim overheard Abu and Alhakem lay the bloody plan of murdering de Bournay in his cell, and he came to me with the news, and gave me permission to act as I pleased. I went at once to the cell of the Christian, and told him of the danger that threatened him, and then I led him and his esquire both out, and conducted them to a place of safety. And thus was that plan frustrated.

"But, sire, it remains for me yet to tell you of the darkest deed of all this conspiracy. The robber chieftain could give a thousand men to the wicked cause, but he must have his reward. First, he must have the privilege of plunder. This was granted at once. Secondly, he must have the fair daughter of Baal Tamar for his own. He had seen her, and he longed to possess her. And, sire, Abu Zamar did carry the lady Lulah far away up the river, and deliver her into the hands of the dread robber. But, praise be to Allah, I was upon the wretch's track, on the dark night of storm and gloom when he made the dreadful compact with Mira-

molin, and when I knew that Lulah had been conveyed away, I sent Leon de Bournay after her. I knew the secret of the subterranean chambers to which she had been borne, and I explained them to the knight, so that he could make no mistake. And the Norman saved her, and he slew the robber chieftain, and to-day, sire, he did collect all his Christian companions, and he hath swept the dreadful scourge away, so that the mountain robbers shall trouble our people no more. While I set de Bournay upon the track of the robbers, I opened the plot to Omah and to Baal Tamar, and to Beder Basim, and to others of your faithful friends, and thus was all prepared to unmask the villains, and thwart them in their fiendish purpose. It is done, sire, and your throne is safe!"

"One word more!" whispered the king, quivering with excitement. "Who art thou? Speak!—tell me!"

A fearful shudder shook Euric's frame, and for a while he was unable to speak; but finally he said—

"First, sire, let me open to you one more chapter of Abu Zamar's villainy. Ere thou didst make Ariadne thy wife, Abu Zamar dared to speak to her of love, but she repulsed him upon the instant, and shunned him afterwards. He swore to be revenged, and he kept his oath. Let Beder Basim tell the rest."

Thus speaking, Euric sank back against one of the marble pillars, with his head bowed, and his hands covering his face.

"What is it, Beder?"

"Thus it is, sire," the old jailer replied, quickly, and with energy: "I have watched Abu Zamar in the prison, hanging about him through avenues known only

to myself, and his secret is mine. I have seen him in the queen's apartment, and have heard the speech he made; and thus, from his own lips, have I learned what he hath done. He hath traduced the queen, sire! He hath lied to thee most recklessly. He struck at her good name that he might have revenge. Thy lovely queen is this hour as pure and as true as Heaven itself!"

Like a flash of light came a sudden conviction upon the king's mind. He did not speak to Beder Basim—he did not even look upon him—but he came down from his throne—he struggled forward a few steps, like one who is weak from some whelming emotion—and laid his trembling hand upon the shoulder of the mystic youth.

"Look up!" he whispered.

Euric obeyed—gazed a moment into the monarch's face, and then sank forward upon his bosom, faintly murmuring—

"O! I have a right to rest here now! By thought or by deed I have never wronged thee—never!"

"Pardon! Pardon!" cried the king, while the big tears streamed down his cheeks. "Pardon me, great Allah! O, pardon, sweet Ariadne!" And, with fond murmurs of love and gratitude, he strained the fair young queen to his bosom, and swore that he would never doubt her again.

When Abu Zamar saw that the supposed Euric was none other than the queen, he knew that his last hope was gone; and from that moment he spoke not another word, being resolved that he would die without giving

his sovereign either an admission or a denial of his crimes.

Others of the conspirators were astounded at the strange development; and for a while the only sound that broke the air was the sobbing of the restored queen as she lay upon her husband's bosom.

By-and-by, when the king had become calm, old Beder Basim moved forward, and humbly said:

"Sire, am I pardoned for allowing my prisoner to roam at large?"

And the monarch caught his hand, and fervently answered:

"Aye, Beder; and with my pardon goes my blessing! Heaven preserve thee to me while I live! And may all my friends be preserved as surely as my enemies have this day been confounded!"

* * * * * * *

It was even as Baal Tamar had said. The rebellion was everywhere put down, and the leaders all arrested. The king would not see Abu Zamar again. "I do not care to look upon him," he said, as they spoke of bringing the young sheik before him. "He must die; and it would only give me pain to see him. For his father's sake I have been kind to him; but, O, how cruelly hath he deceived me!"

And Abu Zamar would not see the king. He could not plead innocence, and he would not ask for mercy. He died, with his companions in crime, silent to the last; and the good people of Cordova felt easier when they knew he was no more.

One day, while the king sat with his head resting

upon the bosom of his beautiful Ariadne, she spoke to him of a subject in which she took deep interest. He listened to her until she had finished, and then he started up and clapped his hands.

"By Allah!" he cried, "it shall be done." And straightway he sent for his vizier.

"Baal Tamar," he said, when his minister had arrived, "listen to me calmly, for I have something of more than ordinary moment upon my mind The Norman knight hath done great service to the State. He hath entirely routed and exterminated the dread robbers of the Morena."

"I know it, sire."

"And he hath suffered much in our cause."

"I know it, sire."

"And twice hath he saved thy daughter, Baal."

"Thou speakest truly, sire."

"He loves the fair Lulah."

"I know it."

"And if I mistake not, Baal, she loveth him in return."

"Aye, sire—it is even so."

"Then," said the king, casting a fond glance upon the queen as he spoke, "let us make them happy. I am so happy now—so full of joy, and love, and gratitude—that I would bless such faithful hearts if it were in my power. What say you, Baal?"

"When I think of the past," replied the vizier, slowly and solemnly, but yet with open frankness—"when I think that my child might have been the wife of a villain whose name I will not pronounce—when I think of all she hath suffered, and of what she hath escaped

from—I can only feel that I owe it to her, and to myself, to secure her happiness for the future. If it pleaseth you, sire, my consent shall not be wanting."

In a little while after this Leon de Bournay received a summons to repair to the palace. He was conducted at once to the royal presence, where he found the king, and the queen, and Baal Tamar ; and where he found the lady Lulah, too, smiling through dewy tears.

"Leon de Bournay," the monarch said, "we have not forgotten the services thou hast rendered unto us, and we have resolved upon rewarding thee in a manner which we believe will be most acceptable. Wilt thou take this, and feel that thou art repaid ?"

Abderahman stepped down from his seat as he spoke ; and, taking Lulah by the hand, he led her forward, and gave her to the Christian knight.

"Will this gift repay thee ?"

But all that de Bournay could reply, was to murmur a blessing upon the king—a blessing upon those who had been instrumental in this—and then he pressed the lovely maiden to his bosom, forgetting not, in this the hour of his greatest joy, the God who had so mercifully sustained him through all his trials.

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